



**ARNHEM LAND**

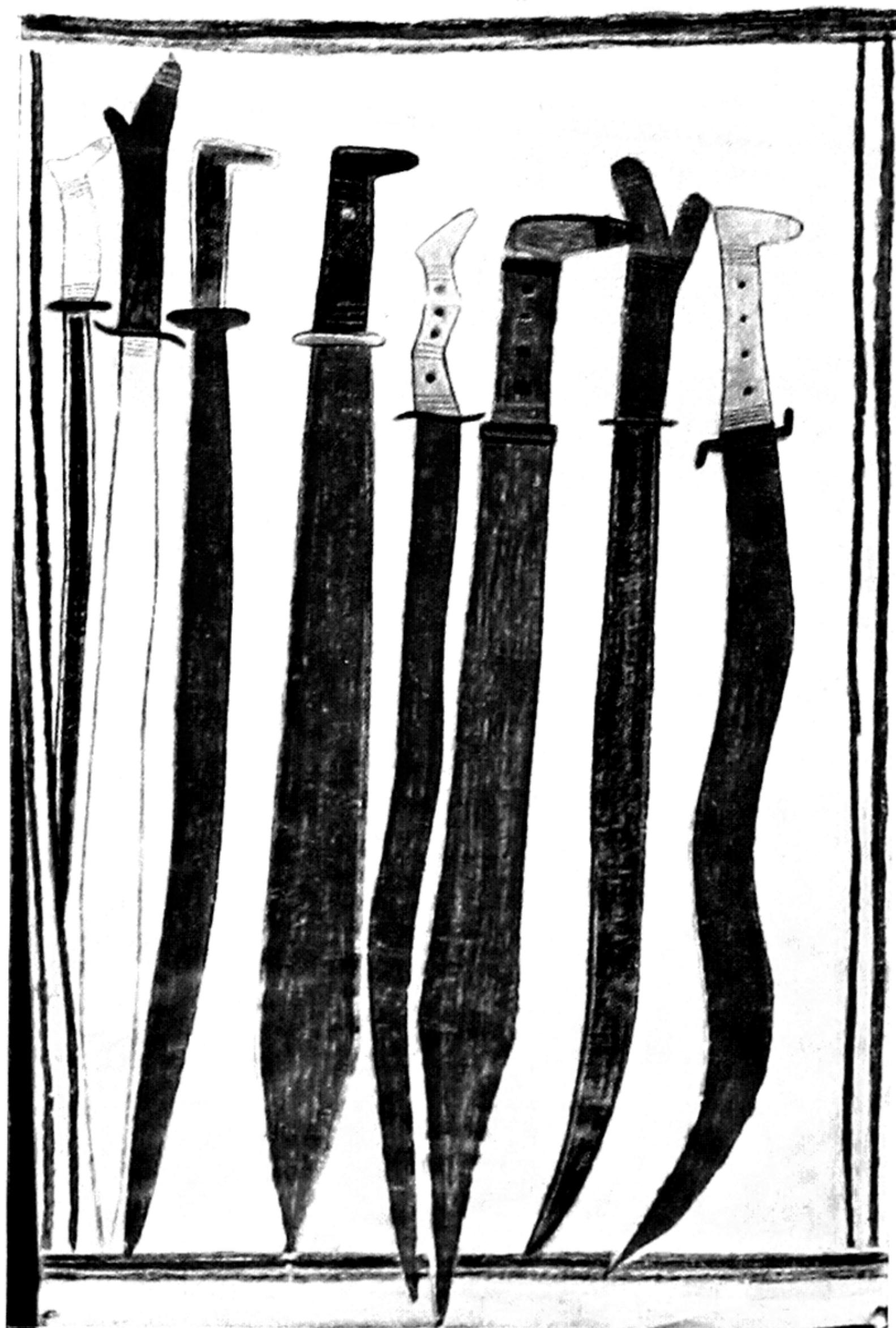


Plate 1: Drawing: Weapons used by Indonesians and later adopted by the Arnhem Land Aborigines.

# ARNHEM LAND

*Its History and Its People*

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BY

RONALD M. BERNDT

AND

CATHERINE H. BERNDT



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TO  
PROFESSOR A. P. ELKIN

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### Remarks Concerning Illustrations:

Plates 1, 2, 5, 7, 9, 10, 12a and 13 are reproduced from the original brown paper drawings done by various Aboriginal artists at Yirrkalla, north-eastern Arnhem Land. Lumber crayons were used, instead of ochres: the drawings vary in size from two and a half feet to four or five feet in length, one and a half feet in width. They were kindly photographed by Mr S. Woodward-Smith of the University of Sydney.

Plate 12b is from the original negative kindly lent by Mr H. Shepherdson of the Elcho Island Methodist Mission Station.

All other photographs were taken on the field by the writers.

## FOREWORD

This book was planned to throw additional light on a little-known country — Arnhem Land, in the north-eastern corner of the Northern Territory of Australia.

We are concerned principally with the Aboriginal inhabitants of the coastal areas, and with the different forms of alien contact to which they have been subjected from the past up to the present day. Our intention has been to place in perspective the historical sequence of conditions in this region, relating these to the life and thought of the indigenous population.

We see the world of the Arnhem Landers gradually widening through the years, from the period when the coast was visited by what we now term Ancestral and Spirit Beings to the time of the pre-Macassans, followed by the Indonesians, Europeans and Japanese. It is a panoramic conception; for no other Aboriginal group in Australia has been subjected to such varied, and at times intensive, cultural impact as have these Arnhem Landers. The most remarkable result has been their ability to maintain throughout this intercourse so much of their cultural and moral integrity.

The greater part of this book has been compiled from data obtained during our own anthropological field research in Arnhem Land; these were supplemented by documentary material from official and unofficial European sources. Thus we may see the point of view of the Aborigines on the one hand, and of the alien "intruders" on the other.

We have purposely not included a detailed account of the indigenous native society and culture, because to do this satisfactorily would involve a far more elaborate discussion than is possible here. The reader particularly interested in this aspect will find a brief description of the cultural background, and something of the traditional life of the Arnhem Landers, in Chapter 2:

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here the main purpose has been to create a basis for our study. Many other aspects, too, need more detailed treatment – for example, the period of pre-Macassan to Macassan contact (see Chapters 5 to 10), Europeans on the north coast (Chapter 11), and conditions during the present day (Chapters 17 to 18). Nor have we attempted to discuss native policy in general, in relation to Arnhem Land and its people. This is a book about the Arnhem Land coast, its natives, and its contact through the centuries with peoples of differing cultures. We see the Arnhem Landers' adjustment to the first waves of Indonesian association, and their consequent "unsettlement" when this form of contact was upset by the infiltration of other groups: conditions altered rapidly, and the Aborigines found themselves unable to grapple successfully with their changing circumstances.

Within this picture are a multitude of experiences expressed in a variety of ways – the Aborigines' association with Indonesian traders, their journeys to the East India Archipelago, their intercourse with Torres Strait Islanders, Japanese, and Europeans, and their constant endeavour to maintain their cultural independence and to defend their territory against the inroads of these visitors. It was this which led to the spearings and "massacres" described in the main body of this book, activities which today we would term a form of guerilla warfare. The whole history of a people's contact with the outside world over many centuries is condensed into a few Chapters of this book: and though some of their experiences may seem to us bizarre and exotic, to the Aborigines of Arnhem Land they were, even if at times unexpected, part of the tapestry of everyday life.

Much of the material in this book was obtained during our anthropological research work in western, north-eastern and eastern Arnhem Land between the years 1946-47 and 1949-50. This followed previous research in other parts of the Northern Territory in 1944-46, which in turn was a continuation of a study made in north-western, middle-north and southern South Australia in 1939-44. The greater part of this work was carried out under the auspices of the Australian National Research Council in conjunction with the Department of Anthropology, Sydney

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University. Between the years 1944-46, however, we were engaged as anthropologists to study native welfare on certain Northern Territory pastoral stations and Army native settlements. The writing and preparation of this book, like our most recent Arnhem Land trip, was made possible by research grants from the Research Committee of the University of Sydney.

We wish to acknowledge the continued help and advice of Professor A. P. Elkin of the Department of Anthropology, Sydney University, to whom this book is dedicated, as well as the courtesy and helpfulness of the Northern Territory Department of Native Affairs, the officials of the South Australian Archives Department of the Public Library, and the staffs of the Methodist and Church Missionary Society stations in Arnhem Land. Our deep sense of gratitude to the Arnhem Landers themselves, particularly those at Yirrkalla, Goulburn Islands and Oenpelli, cannot be expressed in mere words. Perhaps one day, when competent schools have been established in Arnhem Land, the literate among these people will read with interest this history of their people's contact with alien groups. In this way they will receive some compensation and, in some slight degree, our debt to them will be honoured.

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## CHAPTER 1

### BACKGROUND

Arnhem Land, through the centuries, has attracted to its shores a variety of both Asiatic and European voyagers, some interested in exploration for its own sake, and some for economic or commercial reasons. Between the middle of the sixteenth century and the beginning of the seventeenth, this northern part of Australia became known to the Western World through the discoveries of the Dutch and Portuguese.<sup>1</sup> Considerably earlier, however, the coastal regions of Arnhem Land had been visited regularly by Indonesian traders. The date of their first arrival has not been definitely established: but we can make tentative suggestions, based on the traditional records which the Arnhem Land natives have handed down from one generation to another.

In addition to this fairly intensive contact over a long period, Arnhem Land became comparatively well-known during the last phase of Malay-Macassan association with our north coast, and during the exploration of certain English voyagers just before and during the establishment of European settlements.

Later on came the attempted European settlement of this part of the Northern Territory, and the exploitation of its waters for marine products. Japanese and other Asiatics, as well as Europeans, took part in pearl operations; and Christian Mission stations were gradually established at various places all round the Arnhem Land coast. Today only the Missions remain. The whole vast region of Arnhem Land, some 31,200 square miles, is now an Aboriginal Reserve.

In this study of Arnhem Land, we shall see how events fall into their proper historical perspective, from the earliest known

period to the present day. We shall follow the contact of the Aborigines with alien peoples, review the repercussions, and notice something of the effects upon their traditional culture.

The Arnhem Land Reserve, one of the largest in Australia, stretches east and south-east of Darwin in the Northern Territory, across to the western shores of the Gulf of Carpentaria.

The mangrove-lined coast on the north faces the Arafura Sea, separating Australia from the densely populated islands of Indonesia and New Guinea; and adjacent to it, running from west to east, are the islands of Croker, Goulburn, Wessel and Bremer (once Melville). Into the sea here and there flow large rivers, which further inland are usually banked by thick jungles of cypress, gum, stringy-bark, wild fig, bamboo, cycad, screw-palm (*pandanus*), and many other trees and bushes known only to the botanist and native. And tidal salt-water creeks flow among the mangroves, the home of sea-birds, crocodiles and sharks.

On the east the same almost monotonous coast-line fronts the Gulf of Carpentaria, dotted with such islands as Woodah and Bickerton, Winchelsea and Connexion, close to Groote Eylandt.

This great Reserve is bordered on the south by the Roper River; and on the west a natural boundary of rocky hills and sandstone halts the encroaches of the buffalo hunter, who has established himself on the fertile plains and swamps around the Adelaide, Mary and Alligator rivers. In the heart of Arnhem Land, gorges, mountains, swamps and rocky plains spread through country still partially unexplored.

Scattered through the Reserve are Mission settlements controlled by the Church Missionary Society and the Methodist Overseas Mission—Oenpelli, Croker Island (a “Half-Caste” settlement), South Goulburn Island, the Crocodile Islands (Milngimbi), Elcho Island, Yirrkalla, Groote Eylandt, and Roper River. To the south-west, Beswick Government Cattle Station and Maranboy Reserve can barely be said to be in Arnhem Land properly. Near the western border of Arnhem Land, in the so-called “Buffalo country”, are two unoccupied Aboriginal Reserves, the Manasi and Woolwonga; and on the south, the attraction of neighbouring cattle stations (such as Mainoru and Roper Valley) has contributed to the decline of the local population.

## BACKGROUND

Once the term "Arnhem Land" was applied to the whole region east of Daly River, including the area about Darwin and Katherine, Melville and Bathurst Islands, and the "Buffalo country";<sup>2</sup> but since the Aboriginal Reserve was established, the name has been restricted to this.

All through this region, except in parts of the interior, there is no scarcity of food. In the rivers are fresh-water fish, goannas and crocodiles, in the sea and coastal bays many varieties of fish, shell-fish, turtle, dugong and (rarely) whales. At certain seasons the swamps and rivers, streams, waterholes and jungles, teem with wild fowl; eggs are plentiful, and (according to the time of the year) there is a choice of duck, goose, tern (or sea-gull), crocodile, turtle, emu and jungle fowl. Inland and along the coast there is an abundance of meat — kangaroo, wallaby, opossum, bandicoot, porcupine and edible reptiles. Moreover there are introduced water-buffalo, which abound in western Arnhem Land, and are seen today as far east as Yirrkalla, near Cape Arnhem.

Wild honey, fruits, berries, seeds, nuts and vegetable foods such as yam and lily roots and green lily stems, are available in season. And at the tail end of the monsoonal period the sea brings to this coast, particularly on the north-east, large supplies of drifting coconut and other edible nuts.

This, then, is roughly the position of the Arnhem Land Reserve, and it is upon the natural products of this country that the Aboriginal inhabitants have in the past primarily depended. Today, however, the Aborigine does not rely solely on his environment for subsistence. Long years of alien contact have developed in him a desire for introduced goods, a desire which was fulfilled to some extent when the Mission stations were established.

In order to examine the picture more closely, and to see the events presented in some historical sequence, we shall concentrate on the northern and eastern coast of Arnhem Land, and the adjacent islands within the Reserve. This coast-line and these islands experienced alien contact much earlier than did the inland boundaries, along the Roper River and the "Buffalo" plains. The actual interior of the Reserve, except for the bush country towards the Rose River in the south-east, the Arafura and Milin-

gimbi in the north, and the Liverpool River country behind Oenpelli in the west and south-west, seems to be virtually uninhabited.

Although Arnhem Land covers a large area, its population has been assessed at only about four thousand. This includes Aborigines on Mission stations, where tentative census figures are available, while in regions away from direct supervision only approximate estimates have been made. There are only three large un-contacted areas in the whole of Arnhem Land: about the Liverpool and King rivers, and the mainland south of Milngimbi; the neighbourhood of Rose River; and the hills in the south-western corner of Arnhem Land. However, it is only in the first two places that Aborigines are to be found in any numbers, and both together probably contain no more than about a thousand people. These Liverpool groups have been gradually displaced, within recent years, by the westward pressure of people from Cape Stewart and the south of Milngimbi, and many of them forced to fluctuate between Goulburn Islands, Oenpelli and the Buffalo camps. They would number today no more than approximately four hundred.

. . . . .  
 This area, from Rose River in the south to Goulburn Island and Oenpelli in the west, has been mentioned in early literature, particularly by such travellers as Sir Mathew Flinders and Phillip King;<sup>3</sup> and in recent years various authors such as Ion Idriess,<sup>4</sup> Charles Barrett,<sup>5</sup> W. E. Harney,<sup>6</sup> Alan Marshall,<sup>7</sup> Carl Warburton,<sup>8</sup> Ernestine Hill,<sup>9</sup> Colin Simpson<sup>10</sup> and Clyde Fenton<sup>11</sup> have tended to over-glamorise Arnhem Land and its people.

The most important and detailed information concerning the historical and geographical background of Arnhem Land is not generally accessible,<sup>12</sup> although Alfred Searcy<sup>13</sup> provides some valuable notes and reminiscences. But despite some interesting references to the contact of Europeans with natives, these books and notes concern themselves very little with the local people and their lives.

Missionaries too have helped to add to the existing documentary evidence.<sup>14</sup> Professor Lloyd Warner<sup>15</sup> carried out social

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anthropological work in the Milingimbi region, and Dr Donald Thomson mainly in the Caledon Bay district,<sup>16</sup> and while Sir Baldwin Spencer<sup>17</sup> worked with natives on the fringe of western Arnhem Land, Professor A. P. Elkin has carried out field work principally in south-western Arnhem Land.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE ARNHEM LAND ABORIGINES

Who are the people of Arnhem Land? What is the pattern of their life, the background against which these events took place?

The physical characteristics of the Australian Aborigines as a whole are well known — their chocolate-brown skin, wavy hair, slightly prognathoid features and rather broad nostrils. The people of the Arnhem Land coast show some differences from those of the immediate inland and of the centre. Food of all kinds is more plentiful, and fresh water easier to find; and so they are rather more solidly built, with heavier legs and broader shoulders than the "desert" natives. Their skin appears to be darker, although here and there are lighter individuals who show the influence of part-Malayan or Macassan descent. Generally speaking, they are lively and excitable and show emotion more readily than their southern neighbours; all along this coast the tribes have a long history of "blood feuds", kept up between one family and another, or among various clans. They prefer to dispose of their enemies by open killings rather than by the secret work of magical spells — although these too, it is said, are freely employed.

Since on this fertile coast the Aborigines do not have to exert themselves quite so strenuously as those in more barren and inhospitable regions, they can devote more time to material culture — to weapons, cave and bark paintings, and a wide range of sacred objects. For this reason, too, we find numbers of clan and tribal groups within a comparatively small area. Tribal territories are more restricted than in the semi-desert areas where men and women must be almost continuously on the move in their search for food.

## THE ARNHEM LAND ABORIGINES

Arnhem Land belongs to two main groups, who differ considerably insofar as language and certain aspects of their culture are concerned. Perhaps the best way to present a clear general picture of their culture patterns is to outline and contrast the elements that are outstanding in both. For the sake of brevity we shall not digress to discuss minor local deviations like those of the Groote Eylandt and Rose River areas.

A common cultural bond links most of the Aborigines of western Arnhem Land, taking Oenpelli, the Goulburn Islands, and the Liverpool and King rivers, with its eastern boundary near Cape Stewart; but there are some traditional deviations, as well as some linguistic differences. The Maung of Goulburn Islands seem to have been at one period more or less isolated from contact with the mainlanders, who rarely came over to the islands; but at ceremonial times the Maung would come to Sandy Creek, on the mainland opposite South Goulburn Island, for the big *maraain* (sacred) rituals.

The people of eastern Arnhem Land, from Cape Stewart to Blue Mud Bay, refer to themselves as the Wulamba group, a number of clans that form a "tribe" with more or less common cultural background. Natives outside this region, for example those at Groote Eylandt, often call them the "Balamumu Confederacy". "Balamumu" may be roughly translated as "those of the sea", that is, coastal people. The dialects of all these clans may be classed together as Miwoidj'mada. The whole eastern area is divided among a number of clans, some now extinct and others seriously diminished in population, which share certain linguistic groups. These language groups are considered most important, and they belong exclusively to either the *dua* or the *jiritja* moiety, a division which extends throughout this whole area. Descent within them is patrilineal, but a man (or woman) always feels some attachment to the clan and linguistic group of his mother and mother's brother.

In western Arnhem Land, tribes and groups of tribes are (or were) independent units, not subdivided into clans. Tribal blocs were formed by those dependent on their neighbours in matters affecting economy, marriage and secular and sacred ceremony, and certain tribes recognised closer ties with one another than

with other adjacent groups. On the border line between western and eastern Arnhem Land there are tribes affiliated with the eastern people, but retaining their own distinct cultural pattern. Apart from the linguistic variations between the eastern and western groups, and the tribal organisation of the one and the clan-linguistic group set-up of the other, the principal difference lies in the eastern form of mainly patrilineal descent and the western pattern of descent through the mother.

The moiety is the most important feature in the social organisation of the Wulamba people of the east and south-east. It serves to classify under these two main headings all clans and linguistic groups, the known universe, and the whole life of the people, and affiliates all those belonging to the same moiety. The moieties are exogamous, and are thus the basis upon which marriage rules depend.

In western Arnhem Land we find the moiety-phratry arrangement (related to the totem) now influenced from the south by the subsection system, which is widely spread throughout Aboriginal Australia. Another feature here is the *namanamaidj*, which establishes a child's affinity with his father's group. This, together with tribal and linguistic membership, is patrilineal; but the descent of the moiety, phratry (and totem), and subsection, is matrilineal.

In eastern Arnhem Land the subsections have not yet been fully co-ordinated with the kinship structure, and many of the older people do not use them. Normally, however, the subsections are based on a system of marriage and descent, and are essentially a matter of kinship organisation. They group various relatives together under one term, in such a way that for general purposes all kinship terms are reduced to eight; and since there are eight divisions in this subsection system, four belong to one moiety, and four to the other.<sup>1</sup>

The eastern Arnhem Landers possess certain fundamental features in common with most other Australian Aboriginal communities. Away from European settlements, for instance, they are hunters and collectors who must forage for their food. On the northern and eastern coast of Arnhem Land food is certainly abundant and varied, but its constant supply depends on the

rhythm of the seasons and (so these people believe) on the mythical characters of the "Eternal Dreaming" period. To ensure an adequate and constant supply of animal and vegetable food the eastern Arnhem Landers rely on their great ceremonial cycles — the *djunggawon*, *kunapipi*, *ngurlmag*, and the *dua* and *jiritja* moiety *nara*. These rituals are connected with the most important Ancestral Beings (like Djanggawul, Wauwalak, Lajindjung, Banaidja and Baijini) and serve as the basis of the indigenous religion.

In the west the pattern is much the same. The Ancestral or Spirit Beings have different names, but their function is similar to that of their eastern variants. There is, for instance, a Fertility Mother named Amungundji, or Waramurunggoindju. With her husband, Wuraggag, she is the guardian of and the essence behind all the sacred ritual, such as the *maraiaiin*, and the age-grading *ubar* ceremonies. The ceremonies have also a mass of separate mythology, associated with Jurawadpad, the Snake man, but they are indirectly associated with the Fertility Mother.

All this ritual, however, is not concerned merely with the provision of food. Its purpose is primarily to ensure the continuation of the human species, and the increase of all other animals, birds, fish, vegetables and so on is a secondary matter. It is concerned with the fructification of all living things, of which human beings (in their own estimation, at least) are the most important.

We cannot discuss here even briefly the doctrines and ritual expressions of the various religious cults of western and eastern Arnhem Land: for although a fundamental thesis is common to them all, there are many local manifestations. That is to say, there are a number of different religious cults, each having its special mythology associated with Creative Beings; and their ceremonies, although often similar, differ in many respects. Some are concerned principally with the initiation of youths into the adult ceremonial sphere, and their gradual acceptance into the realm of the sacred. As a young man grows older, and passes through successive stages in his initiation, the religious life of his elders is slowly revealed to him. These particular series are termed age-grading rituals. But there are other ceremonies in which only fully initiated men may participate, and whose significance is

simply religious. Women too have their part — and a vital one — to play in the ritual life.

In eastern Arnhem Land, the most important of all rituals relate to the Djanggawul, a Brother and two Sisters and their companion who in the mythological era came across the sea from an unidentified country far to the north-east. On their journey (so the long song-cycle relates) they stayed for a time at an island called Bralgu, later the home of the *dua* moiety dead, located somewhere beyond Groote Eylandt. Then, on the shining path first of the Morning Star and presently of the rising Sun, they travelled in their bark canoe to land at Port Bradshaw on the Arnhem Land coast. With them they brought their special sacred objects. The Djanggawul Brother had long painted and feathered poles, of phallic significance. Some he plunged into the ground so that water gushed forth; and others, when planted, sprang into living trees. These life-giving sticks were kept hidden for much of the time in a plaited conical mat, a symbolic uterus.

As they travelled, the Sisters gave birth to many people (symbolised, again, by the sacred poles). These were the ancestors of the present-day Aborigines, for before the Djanggawul came there were only spirit beings in Arnhem Land.

At first, we are told, the Sisters alone possessed all the sacred objects, the rituals and songs, which they had brought with them from their distant homeland: the symbols they used, and their actions in dancing, centred about the important cycle of sexual intercourse, pregnancy, and birth. The Djanggawul Brother and his companion had nothing. One day therefore, while the women were out collecting shellfish, the men stole the sacred objects and took them back to their own camp, and there they began the special dancing and singing. But the Sisters, when they discovered their loss, did not protest very strongly. Now, they agreed, the men could attend to the rituals on their behalf, doing most of the "work", while they themselves devoted more time to raising their families (in the way of Fertility Mothers).

This division still holds in the eastern Arnhem Land today, where women play a less active rôle in sacred ritual than do their menfolk. Today, too, replicas of their sacred objects are treated reverently and surrounded with ritual and symbolism. The long

poles, painted with conventional designs and hung with vividly-feathered strings, are stored in a special hut on the sacred dancing ground. From this hut, the uterus, men emerge with them to posture and dance, while women also dance in the main camp: and the ceremonies of this cycle conclude with an elaborate bathing ritual in which both men and women take part.

The Djanggawul rituals belong to the *dua* moiety. People of the *jiritja* moiety have some share in them through their mothers and mothers' brothers; but they have their own ceremonies and beliefs as well. Laindjung, a counterpart to the Djanggawul but much less important, also came out of the sea to the Arnhem Land coast from somewhere away to the east, and through his son Banaidja established his mythology and rituals. Many such Ancestral or Spirit Beings are said to have reached the north coast of Australia by sea (see Chapter 5), and perhaps beliefs of this sort reflect some early experiences of alien contact, or some incidents which served as focal points for the diffusion of alien ideas. In western Arnhem Land, too, mythology reveals a strong alien orientation — although this feature may have been superimposed in later years as a result of Indonesian intrusion. Thus the great mother Waramurunggoindju and her husband Wuraggag (now the landmark Tor Rock), like Jurawadpad and most of their contemporaries, landed at various places on the Coburg Peninsula after travelling from some far island identified, today, as "Macassar".

Nevertheless, there has been inland influence as well. The Djanggawul *nara* ceremonies, shorn of much of their mythological significance, have spread right across to the borders of Western Arnhem Land. The two Wauwalak Sisters came overland from the south to the northern Arnhem Land coast, where they inspired the three age-grading ceremonies: the *djunggawon*, associated with circumcision, and known but not performed in western Arnhem Land (where most of the tribes are non-circumcising); the *kunapipi*, more recently introduced into eastern Arnhem Land; and the *ngurlmag*, rarely performed today, with its probable origin the *ubar* hollow-log initiation rituals of western Arnhem Land. The Kunapipi has been introduced into

western Arnhem Land, too, coming up from the south and the south-east almost to the coast near Goulburn Islands.

The north-eastern people, like their western neighbours, pay great attention to the outward expression of their religious ideas, to provide a guide to ritual behaviour and to impress certain concepts on the minds of postulants. Their sacred objects do not consist only of those introduced by Djanggawul, Laindjung and other Beings. In the *nara* and other rituals many beautifully made *rangga* are used, some associated with natural species or with totemic features, others with human organs and ancestral people. Usually conventionalised, they are made from hard or soft woods, cane or paperbark, sometimes bound with jungle-tree twine, and decorated with clan totemic designs and colourful feathered strings. Human figures carved from blocks of wood are painted and ornamented in a similar way. Many other sacred objects are used in the Wauwalak ceremonies — the *ubar* drum of the *ngurlmag*, for example, the tall grass-bound *Jelmalandji* posts of the *kunapipi*, and the long *julunggul* "trumpets" and dancing posts of the *djunggawon*. In western Arnhem Land, religious feeling finds concrete expression in the varied shapes and designs of the *maraein* objects, which include representations of birds and animals. Their form and workmanship are usually pleasing to the eye, but to the craftsman this is of secondary importance.<sup>2</sup>

Let us summarise the place of indigenous religion among the people of Arnhem Land.

In Aboriginal societies throughout Australia, this religious faith has been the mainstay of social life, giving meaning and background to behaviour patterns and institutions. Most people believed unquestioningly in the essential "rightness" of their way of life. Everything was explained, each member of the community had a definite place in the scheme of things, and the future was well determined.

Today, however, the Aborigines find that conditions are rapidly changing. The pressure of contact is greater now than it has been in the past. Beliefs that they have held for centuries are being questioned, and new ways and ideas are being enforced.

## THE ARNHEM LAND ABORIGINES

The old ceremonies, with their cycles of songs, are not performed so frequently, and the sacred objects are beginning to lose their significance. The religion and mythology which once held together all aspects of Aboriginal life are being weakened, and the traditional code no longer serves as a basis for the patterning of their lives. Instead the Aborigine is coming to rely more and more constantly on introduced criteria and beliefs, but because the change has been comparatively sudden he cannot adjust himself immediately to them, and so they fail to satisfy his needs.

We have referred more specially to the religion and associated beliefs of these Arnhem Landers, because no other aspect of their life expresses more fully the vividness and depth of their indigenous behaviour and thought. There are many other important elements in the Aboriginal cultures of Arnhem Land. Some will make their appearance in later Chapters, while the reader interested to learn more is referred to the anthropological works already mentioned. Our main purpose here has been to provide a cultural setting for our study of "outside" contact on the north coast of Arnhem Land. This, then, is the fundamental background of these Aboriginal societies which took the impact of contact, over a long period, with alien peoples.

## CHAPTER 3

### ALIEN CONTACT IN NORTH-EASTERN ARNHEM LAND

Here, and in the following Chapter, we shall summarise broadly the alien contact that has taken place on the Arnhem Land coast. By this means we may observe in some kind of historic perspective the panorama of contact, and the inevitable repercussions on the life of the Aborigines. Then, having outlined the main picture, we can proceed to fill in some of the details.

For our purpose here, much more material is available in eastern Arnhem Land than in the west on the native's attitude towards alien contact. The full effect of such contact in the western area was comparatively late, while in the east it extended over a much longer period. Because of this, the western people suffered more seriously from its deleterious effects, but the eastern groups, who had a much longer and even more intensive record of contact, were able to adjust themselves gradually, and apparently with greater success. Official documents tell us something of the contact that took place in Arnhem Land, but since the western regions were closer to white settlement and administrative centres, far more is available concerning them.

Let us look, first, at the eastern side.

No other group of Aborigines in the Northern Territory, or perhaps in all Australia, has been subjected to such intensive contact with alien peoples, over such a long period of years, as have the coastal natives of north-eastern and south-eastern Arnhem Land.

Their association with Indonesian voyagers, with Malayans, Macassans from the Celebes, and people from adjacent islands,

commenced perhaps some hundreds of years ago, when these travellers of the sea expanded their field to include the North Australian coast. They came in search of trade, of trepang (*bêche de mer*), tortoise-shell, pearl-shell, sandalwood and timber.

But even before this, so these Aborigines tell in the songs that record and preserve their traditions, the "Baijini" people visited their shores. These Baijini, or pre-Macassans, also came from the western islands beyond the Arafura and Timor Seas; and the Aborigines still sing today of the ships in which these people arrived, and the women who came with them; the stone dwellings they built on the Australian mainland; the cloth that they wove and dyed; the clothes they wore, and the way in which they speared fish and cultivated small gardens. They are said to have been paler than the Macassans, a golden brown or copper colour like certain flying foxes. The Baijini era is looked upon, now, as belonging to the far-distant past — a part, almost, of the Ancestral Dreaming period, when the great Spirit Beings walked the earth. In some stories the Baijini are said to have been contemporaries of the most important among the Ancestral Beings, the Djanggawul Brother and Sisters.

The Aborigines distinguish this period from what they regard as historic times, when the Indonesians came sailing to the coast in their praus. They arrived with the north-west monsoons in October or November, staying for at least six months of the year and returning home again with the south-east winds. Occasionally some of them remained behind with their ships all through the dry winter, to be on hand when the fleets arrived at the beginning of the wet season.<sup>1</sup>

We cannot be certain of the approximate period when this Indonesian contact commenced, but tentative calculations place it in the early sixteenth century. Numerous camp sites, archaeological remains, old graves and tamarind trees testify to a prolonged association. Some of the large Macassan settlements have left concrete evidence behind them. In the north-eastern corner, for instance, quantities of pottery fragments have been found on an island at the mouth of Port Bradshaw and along the adjacent mainland.

But it is in the realm of the great song cycles and the stories which survive that a colourful picture of Malayan and Macassan life on these shores is unfolded.

At various sites on the north-east and south-east coast of Arnhem Land, at Arnhem Bay, Melville Bay, Port Bradshaw, Trial Bay, Caledon Bay and Groote Eylandt, these Indonesians of different types (not all true Macassan or Malay traders) founded their settlements. They built their houses on stilts, roofed them with woven leaves and fibre of coconut palm and even furnished them in an elementary way. They kept fowls,<sup>2</sup> fastened by one leg to the posts of the huts. Nearby they erected large boilers, and racks for drying the trepang, and out in the bays their ships were lying at anchor or being repaired. Each main settlement was a hive of industry, with Macassans and Australian Aborigines employed as labourers for specified payments. There were bartering depôts. Local natives brought in pearls, tortoise-shell and other natural products that the Indonesians wanted, and were given in exchange East Indies currency, introduced foods such as rice and sweetmeats, or cloth, knives and tobacco. This trade was well established and its influences are still apparent today.<sup>3</sup>

The visitors not only brought goods from their own country. While they were settled on the mainland they manufactured pottery, knives, cloth and sails, and they kept written accounts of their transactions with the Aborigines and with their own employees. The effects of their sojourn are seen in some forms of the local material culture. They introduced the dug-out canoe, which has almost replaced the indigenous bark variety, and it was from them that the natives learned to use steel in making knives, spear blades and tomahawks.

But it seems to have been in their diversions and entertainments, or in their ceremonies, that the Indonesians exerted their greatest influence on Aboriginal life. Watching them, the Aborigines learnt to play cards,<sup>4</sup> and began to adapt their song rhythms to alien tunes and the sounds of foreign musical instruments. Their mortuary ceremonies came to be associated with the departure of the praus, and with Macassan burial rites.<sup>5</sup> The important secular ceremony of the carved *wuramu* figure, the

"Collection" or "Crook Man", was directly inspired by what Aborigines had seen in Macassar and at home on the mainland.<sup>6</sup> At various places along the coast the visitors declared certain rocks to be sacred. They called them *karei*, or "King" rocks, and placed on them food and money as offerings to a guardian spirit. At the beginning and end of the trading season, it is said that the Indonesian fleets met in Arnhem Bay to perform ceremonies that culminated in wild debauchery. Alcohol was freely distributed. There were singing and dancing, fighting and flashing of knives, and the prostitution of Aboriginal women. But such scenes were more frequent during the later phase of Indonesian contact.

During the earlier period of contact the relations between the Aborigines and the traders seem to have been most amiable, although perhaps the memory of this has mellowed with the passing of time. Trafficking in women, according to their tradition, was more carefully controlled. Organised relationships were set up, where women went more or less automatically to the trading partners of their husbands or parents; and during the Indonesians' ceremonial periods they made gifts of food and other goods to the Aborigines, who reciprocated by sending over their women. Aboriginal women used to work in and around the huts of these traders, and the important leaders, such as captains of praus, maintained their own mistresses. It is said too that Indonesian women were very occasionally brought to these shores, but those who did come were for the most part treated as prostitutes. Alcohol was not so plentiful during this early phase of contact, and it was not until the period from about 1800 until 1907, when Indonesian trading was prohibited by the Commonwealth Government of Australia, that severe fights and brawls became common in these coastal settlements.

Over the years these visitors took back with them to Macassar numbers of Aboriginal men and women. Some of them were returned in the following season to their home camps in Australia while others remained behind in their new environment.<sup>7</sup>

It is difficult, after so great a lapse of time, to be sure of the actual state of affairs in regard to sexual relations between Indonesian traders and Aboriginal women. Many Aboriginal men today deny that their womenfolk had illicit sexual relations to

any extent with the visitors, and Professor Lloyd Warner used such statements as a basis for his opinion that the Malay traders did not interfere with native women.<sup>8</sup> But the women themselves offer a different point of view, and so do the songs and stories which have survived to the present day. Men are often unwilling to admit that they themselves, or people of their group, were induced by threats or by liquor to barter their wives and daughters, or that they allowed them to go to the traders because of their ties of friendship and trading relations. Often they attempt to "cover up" the fact that certain people are half or part Macassan, by insisting that their light skin has a spiritual rather than a purely physical explanation. The women, however, are more candid, and many of the older ones among them openly regret the passing of the Indonesian traders. Such an apparent contradiction is not unusual in matters of this kind, when casual liaisons have been carried out over a long period and then brought suddenly to an end through pressure of external circumstances.

The contacts of these Baijini and Indonesian people may have influenced the temperament of the coastal Aborigines, for they are (broadly speaking) more hasty tempered and emotional than the southern and central Aborigines, given to aggressive displays of anger and elementary warfare. The physical effects, however, apart from the infusion of an alien strain in the Aboriginal stock, seem to have been negligible; their indulgence in alcoholic drinks appears to have had no effect upon their general well-being,<sup>9</sup> while venereal diseases are virtually unknown in this eastern region.<sup>10</sup> This contrasts with conditions at Goulburn Island and Oenpelli, in western Arnhem Land, where the prevalence of venereal diseases (especially gonorrhoea) seems to have led to a high incidence of sterility, and so to a declining birth rate. Western Arnhem Land Aborigines have a reputation of being sexually rather lax, whereas various writers have expressed the opinion that the eastern Arnhem Landers are less willing to trade their womenfolk and have consequently been better able to regulate their sexual relations with "outside" people. Actually this impression seems to have its origin in the fact that the sexual pattern of both societies shows certain differences. The one is

more inclined to be blatant about sexual associations, while the other, perhaps equally promiscuous, is less willing to acknowledge this fact in public.

Even before the memorable meeting of Captain Mathew Flinders with Pobassoo, on 17 February 1803,<sup>11</sup> in the "Malay Road" between the English Company Islands and the mainland near Cape Wilberforce, Dutch and Portuguese voyagers had visited the north coast of Australia,<sup>12</sup> but their contact with the Aborigines seems to have been only transitory and unimportant. Before this, too, there is reason to believe that these coastal people had some association with native groups of the Torres Strait Islands and southern New Guinea. This subject is treated in one of the long song cycles of eastern Arnhem Land — although in later years, when the Missions introduced Badu Islanders (from the Torres Straits), these indigenous songs proved receptive in some degree to new ideas concerning that area.<sup>13</sup>

Mathew Flinders was followed by other explorers and surveyors,<sup>14</sup> until in the last quarter of the nineteenth century European traders became increasingly familiar with the Arnhem Land coast. About this time the relations between Macassans and the Aborigines began to deteriorate, and a number of massacres of these Indonesian visitors<sup>15</sup> were reported. Intercourse between Aborigines and Europeans was far from amicable. Mass shootings took place, native women were abducted, and some white men were speared. There was an attempt to settle part of the "Arafura" country, between Milngimbi and Elcho Island; in 1885 Florida cattle station was established near Mount Delight, between the Woolen and Blyth rivers.<sup>16</sup>

When the Macassan visits to the north coast came to an end there was an influx of Japanese pearlys and traders, and a few Europeans began to concentrate on trepanning. These people employed on their boats Aborigines from Darwin, Bathurst and Melville Islands and Goulburn Islands, as well as natives from the Torres Strait Islands, so that the coastal Arnhem Landers came in contact with a variety of "racial" types. The Japanese, for example, did not remain for long on friendly terms with the local natives; there were occasional spearings and massacres,

especially in the region about Caledon Bay and Blue Mud Bay. Some Europeans too were involved in spearings, so that by the 1930's the Aborigines of these parts had gained a reputation for being "savage and warlike".

The natives, however, were not entirely to blame for their occasional attacks on invading strangers, who had not the long-standing trade ties of economic reciprocity and friendship that the Indonesians had enjoyed. When we look more closely into the underlying reasons we can understand that the Aborigines might well have resisted the insidious forms of exploitation, the low bartering estimates, and the constant interference with their womenfolk. Matters were accentuated by a punitive expedition led by police, which went with horses from Milngimbi to Blue Mud Bay and Caledon Bay,<sup>17</sup> and indiscriminately shot a number of Aborigines; while the killing of a police constable on Woodah Island, near Groote Eylandt, aroused a *crescendo* of publicity and outcry in Southern newspapers of the day.<sup>18</sup>

By 1930 several Mission stations had been set up at various places along the coast, so that in succeeding years most of the Aborigines in this region were in more or less constant contact with missionaries. A Church Missionary Society expedition in 1934, and a local trepanger, apprehended some natives who were associated with a Japanese massacre at Caledon Bay and brought them to Darwin for trial. Soon after this, in 1935, Dr Donald Thomson set out on a pacificatory expedition with the purpose of finding out the reasons for the hostility of these natives, the extent of Japanese contact, and the general nature of local conditions.<sup>19</sup> During the north-west monsoon season of 1935-36 and during 1936-37 unrest among these Aborigines became more marked, mainly owing to the invasion of the Arnhem Land Aboriginal Reserve<sup>20</sup> by large numbers of Japanese and European traders.<sup>21</sup> Missionary enterprise was extended and intensified too, attacking indigenous forms of social behaviour and morality in a way which met with little positive resistance — although attempts were made to oppose the less insidious intrusion of traders, bent on purely economic (and sexual) exploitation. Evangelisation became closely co-ordinated with the aim of establishing all along



Plate 2. Drawing, Port  
Brabandar at itshey-day  
when it was an  
important Indonesian  
settlement.



Plate 3: Wonggu at Yirrkalla

the coast, centres of white settlement in the form of Mission stations. These Mission bodies were interested mainly in the problems of becoming self-supporting, of saving the Aborigines' souls, and of disseminating European beliefs and conventions.

A little before war was declared between Australia and Japan the visits of Japanese traders and pearlers to the Arnhem Land coast were curtailed, and finally forbidden altogether. Army, Air Force and Naval bases were formed in various parts of the Northern Territory, particularly after the bombing of Darwin in 1942-43. On the north-eastern coast the main camps of this kind were at Gove (Yirrkalla Mission settlement), Milngimbi, and the Wessel Islands, while there was a civil aviation and Air Force base at Groote Eylandt. Aborigines of these parts came subsequently into close contact with several thousands of Air Force and Army (as well as Naval) personnel. They were intended for menial work and employed in a variety of ways. Boats and 'planes were continually passing to and fro;<sup>22</sup> and the isolated crashes of a few 'planes, the activity of Army camp life and entertainment, and other phenomena of an artificial and abnormal life, heightened and altered the tempo of indigenous life. Traditional ceremonies and food-collecting were interrupted and curtailed, and the equilibrium of social life in general was far more deeply disturbed than it had been throughout all the preceding centuries of alien contact.

When these military establishments were finally abandoned (the last, Gove, in April 1946) the Aborigines were left to Missions whose staffs had been depleted, and who could not provide steady employment for the many natives who clustered about their stations. So the natives found themselves longing for the old times, when food and trade goods were generously distributed. The customary staid smoothness of Mission life, with its calm treatment of religion, they found depressing. Where, they asked, were the war-time picture shows, that brought before them rough-riding cowboys, lingering love scenes, and partially-naked white women, and the strange musical accompaniments of this form of entertainment? This nostalgia for past pleasures led to increasing signs of irresponsibility among the younger people, a

trend towards sexual excess and a desire for increased contact with Europeans.

Such is the general outline of the conditions that have some bearing on our main theme.

During the Malay-Macassan epoch the Aborigines seem to have maintained a fairly well integrated pattern of culture, absorbing or discarding new ideas without seriously disturbing its basic structure. The early Indonesians were to the Aborigines just representatives of another clan or tribal group not greatly dissimilar to their own, and so they carried on trade with these visitors, just as they would with members of other clans who had desirable commodities to barter. It was a natural outcome of this that the Aborigines should extend their traditional codes of hospitality, making their womenfolk available to the Macassan traders.<sup>23</sup> When the strangers were thus provided with temporary or permanent wives, the social organisation of the groups and the personal opinions of their members were adjusted to suit both parties — and so a delicate problem was settled. Occasional arguments and fights did break out between them, but these were usually regarded as being comparable to inter-clan feuds or quarrels.

Once the quantities of intoxicating drink began to enter the settlements, especially during the last phase of Macassan contact, relations began to deteriorate. There was irregular promiscuity, women were bartered in return for goods, and quarrelling and fights became more bitter and more frequent. Stories relating the sexual excess that took place during this period show how strongly this behaviour affected the psychological makeup of the Aborigines. Old women of north-eastern Arnhem Land like to talk about the days of Macassan contact, and they contrast the uneventful period of recent years with the time when drinking bouts resulted in sexual promiscuity, and food and clothing were easily obtainable. Even the time of plenty that accompanied the Air Force occupation was not the same, they say, as the old trading days and the glamour of the Indonesian visitors.

When the Japanese and European traders came to this coast, the Aborigines at first resented their intrusion. "Why," they asked, "do these strangers take the place of our old friends?"

However, they wanted the trade goods that these people could provide, and so they made an effort to adjust themselves to this new type of contact and to take up again the old traditional form of trading to which they were accustomed.

But they soon found that conditions had changed. These strangers brought with them Aborigines from other areas, and preferred to exploit the wealth of marine products themselves, using relatively few of the local people. This, of course, restricted the distribution of trade goods which they had expected to receive in payment for their work. Large scale trading was curtailed and was almost entirely replaced by individual bartering. This led to general resentment and dis-satisfaction.

They discovered, too, that although these Japanese and Europeans required native women for sexual purposes they were rarely willing to compensate their rightful guardians and husbands, preferring instead to decoy native women on to their boats or (as frequently happened) to take them by force. These same visitors paid no attention to native codes of morality and social intercourse,<sup>24</sup> and preferred to enjoy variety in sexual relations rather than to maintain one woman over a period. Any reasonably attractive woman was sexual bait to these men, some of whom admittedly tried to seduce as many of the younger ones as possible. Such an attitude has not been confined to this north-eastern coast. Many Europeans and Asiatics alike throughout the Northern Territory regarded all Aboriginal women as potential sexual partners, a state of affairs which exists to the present day. The behaviour of Japanese and European traders, trepangers and pearlers was modified in some areas because of the wariness and hostility of the Aboriginal men. At Groote Eylandt, for instance, native women were to some extent segregated from men even in their own camp life.<sup>25</sup> But in other regions, as in western Arnhem Land, it was accentuated.

Conditions of this kind resulted in various "massacres" and spearings, which continued until the Japanese were excluded and European trading was curtailed with the advent of the last war. But this period of what might be termed mutual antagonism had one good effect, which must not be underestimated. It forced many of these Aborigines to avail themselves of their natural

resources and develop their own internal economy, the clans to become more closely integrated and the group as a whole more self-sufficient. They were no longer dependent primarily on export and import, spending a great deal of their time around the Macassan settlements. Such outside goods as did find their way into the society were soon absorbed. It is probable, too, that their womenfolk had far less sexual contact with Europeans and Japanese than with the Indonesian traders. There were never as many of these newcomers on the coast at one time as there had been Malays and Macassans, and the Aborigines were never on such intimate terms with them as they had been with their pre-decessors.

However, the growing intensity of Mission contact, and the presence during the war years of large numbers of European troops, seem to have destroyed the natives' resistance to alien infiltration. Soon the reaction set in — actually the culminative effect of long centuries of contact with peoples who were culturally and psychologically different to themselves; and the result was gradually increasing dependence on Europeans. The desire for new ideas, and for all the material benefits they could achieve, was accentuated: but these were to be obtained only at the expense of their own culture and ideology. Although in the past they had learnt much about the successful absorption of alien belief and practice, these latter years found them wanting in knowledge concerning the practical application of their experience to modern problems. The deviation between Aboriginal and European cultures was greater than that between Aboriginal and Macassan, so that the present day finds these people largely unprepared for the changes that are upon them. Important aspects of their traditional life are disappearing. Religious fervour for the "old gods" is weakening; law and order are becoming more and more a matter of external control; and general disillusionment, with increased sexual laxity, accentuates these features that accompany a period of transition.

While the effects of long alien contact are only too apparent insofar as the native culture is concerned, the direct physical effects (excluding the effect of Asiatic and Indonesian strains on the Aboriginal stock) are few.<sup>26</sup> The fact that venereal disease are

rare in this north-east region<sup>27</sup> seems hard to believe when we consider the extent of Asiatic, Indonesian and European contact, and the sexual intimacy of the Aboriginal women with members of all these groups. Physically, these people remain more or less intact,<sup>28</sup> and increasing sterility has not followed contact as it has at Goulburn Island in western Arnhem Land. But there is a danger today, with the growing association these natives have with the Goulburn Island people, with the "crew-boys" on Mission luggers, and with native and European men and women in Darwin, that venereal disease will be introduced and disseminated. Aboriginal attitudes toward medical attention often preclude an early treatment of such cases, and the disease is allowed to gain much ground before it can be controlled and eradicated.

A word may be said of depopulation in this region. The reasons for this are not the same as at Goulburn Island, or on the cattle stations in the central north-western area of the Northern Territory,<sup>29</sup> but may perhaps be found in the warlike habits of the eastern Arnhem Landers.<sup>30</sup> Constant feuding over a long period is said to have reduced especially the male population, and brought about the extinction or amalgamation of many clans. This warring propensity led to a surplus of women, and had a direct bearing on sexual behaviour. For example, large polygynous families were formed; and these are conventional even today. It was perhaps because of this that the Aborigines were more ready to allow the Macassans and Malays access to their womenfolk: possibly there would have been far more dissension between these people and the Indonesian traders had their social structure been primarily monogamous.

## CHAPTER 4

### ALIEN CONTACT IN WESTERN ARNHEM LAND

In western Arnhem Land many of the original tribal groups have been gradually displaced, and their territorial boundaries have become vague. Some of them have been forced away from their traditional hunting grounds by the pressure of others. People from the Liverpool River area, for example, have in recent years been pushing westward, dislodging scattered groups which had been weakened by alien contact. But an even more powerful force has been the attraction of the two local Mission stations, drawing the Aborigines of this area into contact with European ways and thoughts.

There has been a Mission station at South Goulburn Island for more than thirty years, and Oenpelli Mission station (established some nine years later) was for a long period the site of a Government cattle station, managed by Paddy Cahill.<sup>2</sup> On the plains below the western Arnhem Land hills, the buffalo<sup>3</sup> camps have helped to bring about the rapid decline of local Aborigines who were recruited for this industry. Port Essington settlement<sup>4</sup> was founded in 1838, and served to attract many Aborigines. At Malay Bay the half-caste Reuben Cooper, son of a Melville Island buffalo shooter,<sup>5</sup> had a wood-cutting camp; and on the Liverpool River Chinese settlers attempted to grow sugar cane.

In addition to these distractions a number of settlers, beach-combers and traders, along with official police patrols, penetrated into and around this region. Apart from Mission influence, this alien invasion of tribal territory may have caused some of the tribes or certain groups within them to become more closely allied. Personal differences were often submerged in awareness

of, and in uniting against, the common intruder. Nevertheless, this predominantly European contact had the effect of breaking up tribal society as a whole, and of undermining the authority of the elders and councillors. Young and middle-aged men left the tribe to take up employment. When they eventually returned home they were dissatisfied with local conditions, and saw themselves as knowledgeable and experienced men. This had a decidedly bad effect on tribal morale, since traditional behaviour and dogma were questioned, and the authority of the old people discounted.

What was more, this European contact loosened sexual morality. When young married men left their home camps and wives for an undefined period, their womenfolk would seek sexual satisfaction elsewhere. And in areas where white settlement was established and where Aborigines of both sexes were encamped, the white men almost invariably made sexual use of the local women. Spasmodic contacts between "alien" men and Aboriginal women occurred extensively throughout this region; and other women, hearing of the gifts that resulted from such intercourse, would travel to these camps either alone or in the company of their menfolk — who were often likewise attracted.

From the first decade of this century up to the beginning of the recent war, Japanese pearlers and traders frequented the coast of western and eastern Arnhem Land. Aboriginal crews were recruited from Melville, Bathurst and Goulburn Islands, travelling along the coast as far as Groote Eylandt, Borroloola, and even Thursday Island (in the Torres Straits), and meeting other natives who had once been completely unknown to them.<sup>6</sup> In many cases they attained some elementary proficiency in the Japanese language.

The main western anchorages of the Japanese were around the mouths of the Liverpool and King rivers, and large numbers of natives congregated there to associate and trade with them and drink the intoxicants<sup>7</sup> which they supplied. Aboriginal women from the Liverpool area and Croker and Goulburn Islands, were used as prostitutes, and in order to break down more easily the menfolk's objections to this habit the Japanese (like the Euro-

peans and Macassans before them) used intoxicating liquors as gifts or articles of trade.

Before all this Japanese and European contact, and the spasmodic visits of early explorers (such as Dutch and Portuguese), traders from the Celebes had been visiting this western Arnhem Land coast for a great many years. Nevertheless their contact does not seem to have been nearly so intensive as it was further east, and the Aborigines here have not the same traditions of early Indonesian contact that the eastern groups have retained. That is not to say, of course, that these voyagers did not visit the western coastline at an early period; references in mythology do suggest an early association with East Indian peoples. However, later contact with Macassans, Europeans and Japanese has been so intensive in this western region, and has disrupted the internal structure of Aboriginal life to such an extent, that verbal records relating to earlier phases of alien association have been largely obscured.

In western just as in eastern Arnhem Land, Macassan bases and settlements, bays and rivers, were named by these traders; and some Aborigines adopted Macassan personal names, as they have adopted European names in recent years, in addition to their own. They learned to speak "Trade-Macassan"; and the visitors took back with them periodically, to Macassar and other Indonesian islands, some of these natives as crew boys. A number stayed there to work and settle down with local wives, while others returned to their homeland with the Macassans at the beginning of the next trepang season. After 1907, when Macassan trading came to a close, the natives looked elsewhere for satisfaction of the needs that they had developed over the years.

A great deal of association appears to have taken place between the Macassan men and native women. Towards the close of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, this intercourse has been described as almost uncontrolled, and certainly promiscuous. Quantities of liquor entered the trading settlements, and songs and stories tell of sexual licence, drinking bouts and fights.

During the earlier periods of contact, however, sexual intercourse between local women and the traders was apparently

fairly well regulated. As in the eastern regions, it was adapted to fit in with existing Aboriginal institutions for pre- and extra-marital relations, and the lending of women as an expression of goodwill. Even so, it was the practice of the Macassans to make their permanent sleeping camps on islands or on partially inaccessible land, so that while they were sleeping or occupied with native women guards could be stationed to watch for the approach of hostile natives.

While these Indonesians were in the area intoxicating liquor was rarely in short supply. The varieties of this are enumerated with evident delight today by older Aborigines who contrast the excitement and vividness of those days with the "dullness" of present contact.

During the years of World War II numbers of soldiers, members of the R.A.A.F. and the Navy settled in this district, and came into contact with the natives; and camps were established primarily at North Goulburn Island (R.A.A.F.) and near Oenpelli. But these were smaller and contained far fewer people, than did similar bases in north-eastern Arnhem Land. Results of their association with natives were not strikingly apparent. There were spasmodic cases of intercourse with native women; some men were recruited for unskilled and menial work on these settlements, and there was the usual influx into native camps of Army food, commodities and supplies.

Many Aboriginal men and women were attracted to the big Army camps near the main north-south road, while others were recruited for work there. In 1945, for instance, Aborigines from Oenpelli, Goulburn Islands and the south-western corner of Arnhem Land were living in the Army-controlled native settlements at Laramah, Mataranka, Manbulloo, Adelaide River, Koolpinyah and Bagot Road, Darwin; and there were others at the Katherine Government Station, now abandoned. When the war was over some of these people drifted back to their home camps, but many of them preferred to stay close to European settlements.<sup>8</sup> Today, a number of natives from the western Arnhem Land district, and even from as far as Milngimbi, are steadily drifting in to towns, cattle stations and buffalo camps, and especially to Darwin. They form parties and travel down the coast by canoe or on foot across

the buffalo plains, and some of them are brought in by Mission boats.

All this contact, of course, has had a considerable effect on the local Aborigines.

Broadly speaking, western Arnhem Land contains ample supplies of food for maintaining healthy life. There are, it is true, patches of stony or barren country where food is scarce, but these are usually within easy travelling distance of more fertile areas. As in north-eastern Arnhem Land, poor seasons are likely to affect the quality rather than the amount of natural food available. But when Aborigines are congregated around foreign (for example, Japanese and Macassan) settlements, and on Mission stations and buffalo camps, their physical condition often deteriorates. This is chiefly because their customary pursuits have been temporarily if not permanently halted, and their normal diet replaced by one which appeals to them by reason of its novelty — although its basic elements of rice, flour, sugar, tea and tobacco provide a much less varied and balanced menu.

The declining birth-rate among these people cannot be traced to the women's dislike of children: for the most part they are extremely fond of them, and even perhaps over-indulgent. At the same time there is not the same stress on the procreation of children that is found among the eastern Arnhem Landers. Especially at Goulburn Island, women are inclined to feel that pregnancy and the possession of children decrease their sexual attraction, not only for their husbands, but also for the extra-marital partners who are permitted to them in this society. On the other hand, women who do have children do not seem to find them a serious handicap.

Tribal and inter-tribal fighting has been fairly common within the known historic period; but it did not seriously affect the adult male population, and women and children were nearly always spared.

The main factor in the decline of the western Arnhem Land people has been the spread of venereal diseases, leading to sterility; and such diseases have been introduced by alien contact over a great many years. Abortion and contraception are generally practised, and there are occasional cases of infanticide. The result

of all these, today, is the seriously small number of young children to be found in the camps.

The Aborigines themselves say that they did not suffer from venereal disease during early Macassan contact. However, this is not necessarily the case, since along this north coast the natives tend to idealise their early trading days.<sup>9</sup> It is commonly said that Japanese pearlers introduced these diseases,<sup>10</sup> but some information seems to refute this. The same Japanese pearlers and traders associated over a long period with the Aboriginal women of Melville and Bathurst Islands, but Mission authorities say that no cases of venereal diseases have been officially reported from that area; and the birth-rate at Bathurst Island Roman Catholic Mission, where most of the population is centred, shows no signs of decline. Of course, the Japanese quite often carried native crews from other areas, and these people too had intercourse with local Aboriginal women.

To a great extent, however, venereal diseases have been brought into this region by Europeans, and by natives returning from work outside the Oenpelli-Goulburn Islands Liverpool River area. The Goulburn Island people say that venereal disease came from the mainland<sup>11</sup> — from around Port Essington, the site of the first white settlements on this mainland coast; from Darwin; from Oenpelli, in the early cattle station days; from the buffalo camps; and from the Liverpool River area, where there were at one time Chinese timber-cutting camps, and where the Japanese pearlers anchored on the coast, in the direction of Florida,<sup>12</sup> the early cattle station on the Glyde River.

It has been unofficially stated by Goulburn Island Mission authorities that about eighty per cent of the population has at one time or another suffered from venereal diseases, especially gonorrhoea. The Aborigines themselves admit that many local women have had such an infection, and passed it on to the men, but say that nearly all (apart from a few well known cases) have now been cured by medical attention. There seems little doubt that in a number of cases sterility has resulted.

This, then, is an outline of alien contact and its effects in western Arnhem Land, and later Chapters will serve to elaborate some of its more interesting features.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE PRE-MACASSANS

The origin of the north coast Aborigines has been obscured by the passing of countless years, and it would serve no purpose to discuss here this highly controversial subject.

The traditional mythology of north-eastern Arnhem Land tells us that the Djanggawul Brother and his two Sisters, greatest of all the Ancestral Beings, arrived by bark canoe at Port Bradshaw, Jelangbara. They took from the canoe their sacred objects, and the conical *ngainmara* mat. Then they set about establishing the religious cult they had brought; but before doing this they produced the predecessors of the present-day Aborigines. However, there is some evidence that people already existed on the Australian mainland, for during their travels from Port Bradshaw to Elcho Island, and west to Milngimbi, the Djanggawul met and lived with groups of other Spirit and Ancestral Beings, and instigated certain rituals in which the latter took part.

In the same north-eastern region there appeared from the sea the colourful figure of Lajindjung, the Ancestral Being who is primarily responsible for the welfare of the *jiritja* moiety people. Lajindjung emerged from the waters, as a giant stone rises out of the receding tide, at Duwonmilingwu, near Blue Mud Bay. His body bore variegated watermarks, and these were totemic clan patterns. Lajindjung came by himself, but he too was responsible for establishing a religious cult, and for the use of sacred objects that he had brought with him.

Away to the south of Blue Mud Bay, at the mouth of the Roper River, the great Fertility Mother Kunapipi came out of the sea, riding in on the foam-crested waves to the Roper Bar.

And she, too, established a religious cult, which today has spread throughout Arnhem Land, and is found over wide areas of the Northern Territory.

The Fertility Mother of western Arnhem Land, and Wuraggag, her husband, are said to have come originally from Wongatjara, somewhere among the Indonesian Islands. Other Ancestral and Spirit Beings in this region too are alleged to have come out of the sea, from some place far away to the north-west.

This period of visitation by powerful creative Beings represents, we may say, the "Golden Age" of Arnhem Land traditional life. Aboriginal societies were being built up to a more or less definite pattern; laws and prohibitions were taking shape; and a religious view of life was being evolved from the inspired dogma and philosophy of these Beings. Songs and stories tell how they came to the mainland with their various sacred objects, of their creative abilities, and the way in which they established their sacred cults, their travels and the people they met. They represent, apparently, a series of migratory epochs; but because these events are submerged in the distant past, and glamorised by a religious aura, they cannot be viewed as historical. They serve rather to indicate some early forms of alien contact which had a profound effect on the life and thought of the Arnhem Land Aborigines.

It was later, at the beginning of the historical period, that the Baijini people visited the north-east coast. We are told that they arrived after the Djanggawul had peopled this region with human beings: but they came so early that today they are regarded less as historical figures than as mythological spirits, contemporaneous with the major Ancestral Beings.

Thus Djanggawul himself is said to have met Baijini at the sacred site of Jelangbara, Port Bradshaw, and forced him to move to Dagu, not far away; and at this time there was an exchange of valuable feathered strings between them. Djanggawul took from Baijini his charcoal colouring, which he used in painting sacred designs, because Baijini forgot to take with him his black trepang-stirring "spoon" when he left Port Bradshaw. The Ancestral Being Laindjung is also said to be connected in some

way with the Baijini, for he ate rice that these visitors had grown.

Broadly speaking, then, the term Baijini is used to classify the first visitors to the northern coast of Arnhem Land, excluding the major Ancestral Beings who themselves came "out of the sea". All along the coast and on adjacent islands, from Blue Mud Bay to Elcho Island, special sites are said to have been associated with them. There are certain rocks that symbolize a wrecked Baijini boat, or a lost anchor, and various places are named after incidents that occurred during their stay. Personal names of many Aborigines today signify their Baijini derivation. Lalambari, for example, means the "iron bark" used by Baijini in making a house; Dumalumban, "calico cloth"; Bongu, the "washing-well" of Baijini; Bundunga, a Baijini "house with raised floor"; Djurimba, a Baijini "woman's boat"; Karambal, "the buttocks of a Baijini woman, like the stern of one of their boats", and so on.

We cannot be certain just who these Baijini people were. Some versions imply that they were possibly of European origin; but most of the relevant mythology, expressed through the medium of songs, strongly suggests that they were early traders from the East Indies. The Aborigines are quite decided that these Baijini were not like the Macassans who came after them, because they are remembered particularly for the golden copper colour of their skin. Other suggestions have been that they were Bajau or Sea Gipsies, roaming fishermen of Malayan type, who were to be met with in all parts of the East India Archipelago. This is quite possible; for the Bajau, like the Baijini, but unlike most of the later Macassan traders, brought their womenfolk with them. The presence of Baijini women is an important feature in the Baijini songs and tales, and is often stressed almost to the exclusion of Baijini men. On the other hand, among the Bouton-speaking people of Boutong (Boetoeng), a large island south of the Celebes, the word *bawine* means "woman"; and *baini* means "woman" among the Salayer people of Salayar (Salajar or Sal-eier) Island, also south of the Celebes.<sup>1</sup>

The Baijini women are known on the north-eastern coast by other terms as well; and not all of these, so it seems, belong to the first alien epoch. The traditional versions have altered with

the passing of years, and new features have been incorporated which do not rightfully belong. But it is difficult, now, to distinguish these additions from the early terms. As well as the original term *Baijini*, then, we find many others. *Ngona*, or *No-nei*, is common, and is used also to signify a European woman, according to the hypothesis that all "white" people came from *Baijini*. *Nonei*, *noni*, or *nona*<sup>2</sup> means in the Netherlands East Indies an unmarried European or Chinese girl, and *nonya* a married Chinese or European woman, or a Chinese or Malay mistress. *Barambor* is also used, and is probably derived from *perampuan*, a Malayan term for a woman.<sup>3</sup> *Baiwa*, *Daimalung*, *Danggibu* and *Djudara* are given as general names, but may be personal appellations. Moreover, the *Baijini* women are known by terms that refer to the work they did, or the position they held. For instance, *Walunggura*, "tape measure"; *Danunduna lunugguradanungduna*, signifying "working with her hands at sewing or weaving"; *Laiau* and *Djerama*, "calico cloth"; *Deilulu*, "tailoress" (evidently a late European introduction); *Guniungura*, "the walls or side of a house"; *Karandalu*, "wife of a headman"; who was called *Karei* ("King") or *bunggauwa* (translated as "boss"); while the term *Djidaru*, "wife of a headman", may be a personal name.

These *Baijini* men and women are said to have built stone houses, whereas the Macassan traders put up stilted huts roofed with coconut palm. They came to the coast in sailing ships (*lolperu*) similar in many respects to the Malay praus, and apparently settled at various places for fairly long periods. Like the Macassans, they collected trepang; and they relied for sustenance primarily on indigenous products like fish and game, which they caught with harpoons and in traps. Apart from this they seem to have spent some time in cultivating the ground, and in manufacturing cloth for their own use and for trading with the Aborigines they employed.

Their attempt at growing food is important, for in the traditional songs of north-eastern Arnhem Land it receives a great deal of attention. The *Baijini* womenfolk (sometimes one, sometimes two or more women are mentioned) were the cultivators;

and they planted rice in at least two regions—in Warameri and Gumaidj territory.

The general local term for this rice is *birida*, a derivation of Malay *beras*, husked rice, or *bertih*, rice roasted in husk. It was called *luda* by the Baijini, and differed from the Macassan rice, called *dabu* (probably derived from the Malay *dapur*, an oven or cooking place). The Baijini also called their rice *biralji*, while among the Aborigines its sacred name today is *landjalngu*. When the Baijini departed their gardens fell into disuse; and the Aborigines today collect the roots of a type of grass or bulrush, termed *ragai*, which they say grew up in place of the neglected rice.

The cloth made by the Baijini women was woven on an elementary loom, with a shuttle, and was dyed with basic colours in large pots. The old Baijini name for this cloth was *jalajal*, while the Macassans called it *liba*, and the European variety is *dumala*. The peculiar design that they used extensively is known as *darabu*, and comprised a pattern of coloured triangles; today it forms the basis of certain Aboriginal clan designs.

Apart from these main occupations, the Baijini women made arm-bands and necklets, attended to domestic duties, stitched sails for their vessels, and wore coloured sarongs. Sometimes they are said to have worn pantaloons "like trousers", while the men wore on their heads turbans (*djigara*), called "king hats".

Various stories are told of the Baijini women. Two fisher-women named Reial, for example, took their boat down to the sea at Jarinjan near Blue Mud Bay. The marks where they dragged it along may be seen today. The anchor was lost on a sand-bank, and is now symbolized by a rock. For this reason, so the story relates, the women left their damaged boat and returned a little way inland, where they began to cultivate a garden. One of these Baijini women lived with a countryman of hers named Wonadjei.

Other references imply that the initial Baijini settlement was enforced. Some versions say that after their ships had been sunk they set up camps at certain wells, such as those at Matjulbi; where their "tracks" may be seen today to bear witness to their sojourn.

The waterhole at Jinuwi, near Trial Bay, represents a Baijini woman's vagina, commemorating the fact that she had sexual intercourse there. At Jamanga Island, near Cape Wilberforce, a large rock is symbol of a boat that Baijini pulled up on the shore. And at Duldji on the mainland, not far from Pobassoo Island, is the *boijama* tree shade where a group of Baijini rested, while a nearby rock in the sea is their anchor.

Maranggauwa, near the Cato River in Arnhem Bay, is the place of a Baijini's spirit; a moving rock symbolizes his material substance. At Jikari a movable island, which appears to move up and down with the tide from the mouth of the river, is a Baijini boat. And nearby at Guramura, also in Arnhem Bay, are the remains of a large Baijini settlement, later superimposed by Macassans and Japanese, where gardens were planted with rice. The totemic "Bird" people, sometimes described as the ancestors of the present Aborigines, are said to have worked for these Baijini. At Balboi, near Trial Bay, Baijini planted "coconuts", which today are paperbark trees. Near Maindjalnga, not far from Cape Arnhem, grows a "whistling" tree under which Baijini rested from their work of trepanning. And at Banalbi, near Yirrkalla, they were frightened by the Spirit Being called Thunder Man.

Topographical maps prepared by Aborigines, and covering the whole of north-eastern Arnhem Land from Rose River to Milingimbi, with adjacent islands, reveal the tremendous extent of Baijini contact; and the relevant places names serve to enshrine "historical" events, of which we have briefly mentioned a few.

In the song cycle relating to the Baijini, there is some confusion between them and the Macassans: for their cultures, from the Aboriginal point of view, seem to have had many points in common. These songs suggest that the original Baijini series had Macassan songs superimposed upon it after these latter visitors appeared. It is said that the Baijini left the north coast of Australia and went to Macassar, and finally settled there, creating all the country thereabouts. Before the Baijini left the Australian mainland, they looked around and saw smoke rising from a fire far away at Macassar. Then the Baijini headman spoke; "We

have to go there and leave this place. It is better that native people should work for us there." When they reached Macassar the Baijini built a big tank and filled it with hot water. They climbed into it and soaped themselves until they became "white" in colouring, just like Europeans. Aborigines say that this is why the Baijini songs are mixed with those relating to the Macassans.

This Baijini contact introduced to the Australian mainlanders a variety of ideas; and for the first time they seem to have realised something of which they had before been only dimly aware, through the visits of the major Ancestral Beings, whose associations with the outside World were not clearly defined. That is, they began to see their own culture and society in relation to those of other people, in this case the Baijini. They could compare their habits and beliefs with those of the alien, seeing the similarities and the differences. But they did not, apparently, desire to imitate them, preferring to retain their own way of life. Why should they cultivate gardens as the Baijini had done, when they could live adequately without so much additional labour? Cloth-making was the prerogative of the alien. They themselves had no nucleus of raw material for its manufacture, as the Baijini had, and the "secret" of weaving was not taught by the visitors.

On these Arnhem Land Baijini settlements each of these two groups maintained its own cultural pattern; and while both worked together, they do not seem to have been willing to learn from each other. But in many other ways this Baijini contact had a profound effect on native life. It prepared them for later contact with other alien groups, taught them the elements of trade and, what was most important, made them aware of the existence of people other than themselves.

The Aborigines have always been keen observers; and Baijini customs and activity provided them with much material for discussion, which inspired the many stories extant today and served as a basis for the traditional Baijini Song Cycle.

At the close of Baijini contact, which may have been just prior to the first visits of the Macassan traders in the sixteenth century, the Aborigines' picture of the outside World had been considerably enlarged. Before, they had been aware of certain

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other coastal and inland groups of Aborigines, who like themselves were limited in their range of knowledge. Away to the west of Arnhem Land, they knew the islands of Bathurst and Melville, and on the north all those within easy reach of the mainland, as far distant as the top of the Wessels. To the south-east, they knew Groote Eylandt and its adjacent islands, and the hypothetical island of Bralgu somewhere to the east. Now Baijini settlement had widened their horizon, giving them at least some idea of a country and a people other than their own.



## CHAPTER 6

### THE COMING OF THE MACASSANS

The Malayan and Macassan voyagers, visiting the North Australian coast in search of fresh trading grounds, probably followed soon after the disappearance of the Baijini folk. By this time the Aborigines had become in some degree conditioned to the impact of alien contact, and apparently welcomed the visitors.

The first phase of Indonesian contact lasted until about the 1820's, and during this time a variety of East India Islanders journeyed on the praus to the mainland of Australia, which they called Marega, or Jindi'Makarindi. The "Mankasarau" or Macassans from the southern Celebes, near Macassar, apparently pre-dominated, and were known as Bataripa or Manggatara. With them were the Bugis, or Bugadji, also called Pukaru or Bugi'Mankasarau. These Buginese, whose language was spoken over a large part of the southern Celebes,<sup>1</sup> were renowned throughout the Archipelago as sailors and traders.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to these two principal groups, there were natives of Kupang (or Koepang) in Timor, Alor (or Allor), Wetter (Wetar), Timor Laoet (Timor Laut) and Aru. The Bugis seem to have visited the north coast by themselves too, unaccompanied by the Macassans, since Aborigines say that their praus differed from those of the others. The Bugi ship had its bow "bent down", while the Macassan had its bow "bent up"; and the Bugis painted an eye at each side of the bow, so that the boat could see its way through the waters.

In their large and small praus these Macassans and Bugis, with other East India traders, came down in hundreds to the north

coast of Australia. They established bases at various points, as far south as the Sir Edward Pellew Islands, in the south-western corner of the Gulf of Carpentaria. The Aborigines have an interesting story to tell concerning the first appearance of a prau on the Australian mainland.

Two Macassan praus were sighted coming into Port Bradshaw. Most of the Aborigines hurriedly scattered further inland, while others hid in the thick growth of the coastal jungles watching their approach. But two young boys were, for some reason, unaware of all this excitement; and they went out to spear fish in the mangrove swamps. In the meantime the praus anchored in the tidal creek at Daneia, and two Macassan boys left the boat to collect shell-fish. While they were breaking open clam-shells the two Aborigines heard the noise. Stealthily they came creeping up through the foliage, and watched them.

"Who are they?" they wondered, gesturing to each other. "They're not any of our people." Then they looked past the two Macassan boys and saw the two praus. "Maybe they belong to that old story from a long time ago. It might be Baijini, come back." So they drew closer and watched the two strangers.

After a while the two Macassan boys looked round and saw the Aborigines. They said nothing at first, just watched them. Then they all began to speak, but neither party could understand the other. Finally the Macassans made hand-signs, indicating that the other two should come with them to see their "father". As they came close to the Macassan camp they heard singing, and saw these visitors dancing in two groups, separated as in the moiety division of the Aborigines. It is said that these people always dance and sing before they begin their work of collecting trepang. The two Macassan boys signed to their companions to hide behind a large tree, while they went to tell their "father" and see what he had to say.

The two Macassan boys met their "father" and said to him, "We've found something there. It looks as if we found a bird (meaning that they had seen something strange)."

The "father" got up, and taking his knife came with another Macassan over to the tree where the two Aborigines were

hiding. They grabbed the boys' arms and held them tightly, examining them thoroughly all over. Then they took them over to the main camp, where crowds of Macassan men and youths surged around them, chattering excitedly. Then the two Macassan men who had seized the boys gave them food, and taught them to smoke tobacco in the long Malay pipe. Later on, they were allowed to return to their own camp.

They told the other Aborigines how kindly they had been treated, and so many of them from far and near came to camp at this place near the Macassans, and watch what they were doing. The two boys themselves went to work for the visitors, and gradually learnt their language. In this way a number of Aborigines began to understand what these Macassans said, and an increasing number worked for them. At the same time, the Macassans learnt some of the native dialects. Dainasi was the name of the two Macassan boys' "father", and the captains of the two praus were Guramola and Wonadjei respectively.

Similar incidents must have taken place, about this time, at many points along the coast. Because the Baijini contact in the past had been so amicable, the Macassans were not received with hostility: this was to come only during the last phase of their contact. These Macassans, unlike the Baijini, did not bring their womenfolk;<sup>3</sup> and boys such as those mentioned in the story were not usually the sons of the adult voyagers, but rather indentured child labourers.

These first visits of the Indonesians were possibly spasmodic, their main purpose being to test out suitable areas for intensive exploitation of pearl-shell and trepang. Finding a rich field for their activities, they established more or less permanent settlements at various points along the north coast, especially in the Vanderlin Islands and Groote Eylandt, at Caledon and Blue Mud Bays, Port Bradshaw, Trial Bay, Melville Bay, and Arnhem Bay. Probably the largest of these settlements was formed at Port Bradshaw, on and around Wopalinga Island.

They built up their houses on stilts, and for the plaited roofs they brought with them on their praus plenty of coconut palm leaves and fibre. They furnished them in the same way as their native houses in the Indonesian homeland, in this case the Cele-

bes. They kept fowls (*gerauwul*), tied to the posts of their huts by one leg, around which a ring was fastened: and in the praus they brought cats (*miu*), as well. They built kitchens and communal dwellings, erected trepang boilers, and racks for drying the sea-slug. And along the coast they planted tamarind trees, as well as coconut palms. The coconuts for the most part have not survived, wrecked by termites and storms; but large groves of tamarind trees serve as a reminder of the old days of Indonesian contact.

At first only a few Aborigines were employed as labourers, but as time passed and the Macassan visits became annual affairs more of them were drawn in, and the settlements became veritable trading centres. Sometimes the Aborigines carried out their work in conjunction with the traders. Sometimes they worked independently, coming into the base from time to time laden with pearl-shell, tortoise-shell or trepang for bartering. Trading partnerships with the visitors were arranged, personal names were exchanged and all along the coast the native place names were given additional Macassan forms.

Each main settlement was a hive of industry; and although the praus came more or less regularly on the north-west monsoons in October and November and returned home on the south-east winds, a certain nucleus often stayed on the mainland to look after the camp and supervise work. Smaller praus would go out from their harbours to meet the fleets which arrived from Indonesia at the beginning of the wet season.

The Macassans were concerned primarily with earning a living and with trading, and do not seem to have been interested in cultivating gardens, as the Baijini were. They did however, while on the mainland, manufacture knives, cloth, sails, and pottery. This pottery is particularly interesting, and huge deposits of shards remain today at places like Port Bradshaw. Aborigines say, quoting from traditional stories, that it was made with the help of the local people. The "clay" for its manufacture was obtained from local termite-mounds, broken down and crushed, mixed with water, and kneaded to make it pliable. This "clay" was then turned on a primitive wooden wheel, but the process of making the wheel and the details of pot-making

are not known to the present generation of Aborigines; and the pot or dish that resulted was baked in an oven. These utensils were used by natives and Macassans alike, principally for boiling rice or for storing drinking water.

The pottery collected from old sites at Port Bradshaw gives us some idea of the variety of shapes that were in use. Some show around their lips the impress of thumb or finger, and others again have elementary designs scratched on the bowl below the lip. In addition to broken pots and bowls, some of which appear to have been very large, there are fragments of lids, handles, plates, stands and so on. Not all the specimens found are made of local termite-mound, but some were probably brought to the North coast on the praus. The general terms for these pots are *kauwa*, *dandanga*, *jormudjin*, *bani'munijauwi*, and *bamudja*.

The Aborigines, however, never manufactured these utensils independently of the Macassans. In later years when this craft was discontinued they showed no interest in reviving it, preferring to rely rather on their indigenous resources. Large shells, tightly-woven baskets, and paper-bark containers were all that they needed; and they liked to cook their food on the coals.

What did attract them was the making of knives. The great Macassan Song Cycle of north-eastern Arnhem Land describes this process in detail, and today many of the Aborigines still beat out their knives in the old traditional shapes used by the Macassan traders. There are a variety of these shapes, known by different terms. Collectively, the knives were called *banuwana*; a long knife was *barang*, a kris *djaking*, and a sword *dili*.

Tobacco (*dambaku*) in its "loose" flake was termed *ji* or *batariba*, a name used also for the Macassans themselves. It is possible, too, that some opium found its way to this coast, and was known by the term *ji* used for tobacco. Cigarettes or cigars were made too, from loose tobacco rolled in paper-bark or pandanus. They are said to have preceded the long Malay or Macassan pipe, which is still common on the north coast, and may possibly have been introduced by the Baijini.

When the fleets of praus had arrived, trading about the settlements began in earnest. In exchange for their piles of trepang,

their tortoise and pearl-shell, for the work they had done around the station or for the fish and game they had supplied, the Aborigines received food, goods and money; and the accounts are said to have been kept on slips of paper by the Macassan storemen. The food consisted primarily of rice, red syrup in bamboo containers (called *wadji*), and sweetmeats such as *birita'-djangara*, rice mixed with honey syrup; and the most important trade goods were native cloth, knives, and tobacco. Money ranged from the tin *bulei* to the *ringgi* (two and a half guilders, *ringgit*, Netherlands East Indies), and included the *karawat* (copper coin), *doi* (that is *duit*, a copper coin or cent), and *rupia* (*rupiah*, a Dutch guilder or rupee).

As we have seen, these Indonesians proclaimed certain large rocks along the coast to be sacred (*bapali*). They called them *karei*, signifying headmanship equivalent to "king", and placed on them offerings in the form of food, goods and money, to appease the spirits of the sea. When the praus passed by such rocks they would slacken their sails, and send out a small dug-out canoe with an offering to be laid on the rock; for *bapali* really signifies the placing of this on the (rock's) shoulder. It would remain there until was blown or washed off, or disintegrated. The Aborigines, who respected this custom and looked upon the rocks as sacred, would never remove or steal it. At Ambukambu, on Groote Eylandt, there are the two Karei Rocks, named Warari and Dumondi; and near Batalumbu is another, named Walkangi Karei. At Port Bradshaw two Karei rocks are Djungawi and Nangeiba, but the second of these belonged to the Bugis and not to the Macassans.

Aboriginal religion may have been influenced considerably by association with these traders, who were nominally Mohammedan but retained a great many of their indigenous beliefs. However, to discuss this aspect here would involve a fairly detailed account of the religious views and practices of both Aboriginal and Indonesian groups.

The Arnhem Land Aborigines took careful notice of some of the religious customs of these traders. When the mast of a prau was erected, as it prepared to set out on the journey to another settlement or to return to the Celebes, a prayer-man

would climb the mast and chant (*djelauwa*). Or at sunset the prayer-man would emerge from his hut and bow towards the west, repeating the name of Allah. This prayer-man, whom the Aborigines called a "sick man", *buwagerul*, was known as *Deingarū* or sometimes as *Baleidjaga*. He would move his head from side to side; then, holding it with one hand, he would seize with the other the post of his hut, and look towards the sunset, saying: "*ama!*" Then he would bow his head to the ground, calling out "*walata walata!*"

The Macassans used to perform certain ceremonies, such as that mentioned in the story of their first contact with the Aborigines, when they assembled in two groups to sing and dance before beginning the season's work. Their mortuary ceremonies too had a ritual flavour which has been borrowed to some extent at least by the north-eastern Arnhem Landers, and they have inspired some elements of the *wuramu* ceremony.

But the most colourful of all their ceremonies, so Aborigines say, was the gala *Bau'wulji*, translated graphically by Mission natives as "Christmas Day". It was held during the "cold" season at Manangu, in country called by the Macassans *Wusung'-djaladjari*, "the Last Point"—their last main meeting place on the coast, prior to the homeward trip with the south-east winds. This was during their first phase of contact, before they extended their operations further into the west of Arnhem Land. Here in the sheltered waters behind Cape Wilberforce all the praus assembled, their cargoes were checked, and they held a great ceremony of farewell.

During these ceremonies, and others that were intended merely as entertainments, they played musical instruments, let off fireworks, and both the Indonesians and their Aboriginal employees joined in dancing and singing. The musical instruments that seem to have been most common were the *drambil*, *rabana*, *bam'munia*, or *kandarang*, which was both a drum and a stringed instrument; and the *wutaruna*, *duling*, *mulali*, *leibaring*, *djawwundil* or *kundjuling*, a series of attached pipes (like the Pipes of Pan) resembling a mouth organ.

But with the passing of the years, and during the last part of this first phase of Indonesian contact, intoxicating liquor was

introduced, indicating that the traders were not strict Mohammedans. It was used to pay the Aborigines for work accomplished, or goods received, and especially to obtain native women. In the old days, as we have seen, trading partnerships were established between the two groups. These involved reciprocal obligations and created classificatory ties of kinship, so that the visitors were provided with sexual satisfaction during their sojourn on the mainland. This was merely an extension of tribal custom and goodwill, and was viewed as such by the Aborigines.

The use of liquor (in jars, *bodjung*, or bottles, *baladjung*) distorted this arrangement, and led to prostitution on the Macassan settlements; and this in its turn, not having the full sanction of the Aboriginal code, brought dissatisfaction and quarelling. At times of relaxation, when ceremonies were held, drinking bouts were common. There were orgies, in which Aboriginal women took a prominent part, followed by violent quarrels. Fights to the death were frequent among the Macassans themselves; while the Aboriginals, incited by the drink, and resenting the promiscuous interference with their womenfolk, resorted to spearing or knifing those against whom they considered they had a grievance. In return the Macassans "hit back", with their knives and swords, or fired their match-lock guns. However, we shall see more of this trouble later.

It is interesting to note a few of the weapons used by these traders, and well known to the Aborigines. For example, the *djakung* or kris was used for stabbing, and usually hidden by its owner about his person. It is said that as soon as a man was angry he drew his *djakung*. Another species of *djakung* was used in decapitation, while the *kaluna* was specifically a neck dagger. The *djili* was used to pierce a victim from the back, the *badang* for the side of the belly, and the *barang* in general fighting. The *badi*, of two varieties, served to rip open someone's body. One was placed at the victim's side and twisted around, while the other *badi* was jabbed into the navel and twisted to make an aperture for removing the entrails. The *dalpanga* or *bugipanda* (that is, used by the Bugis) was a sword sheathed in a scabbard

and worn at the waist; it was used in body piercing, particularly in stabbing the belly.

The match-lock gun, or *batali*, had a coconut-fibre ignition cord to its pan; and its other names are *walngaru*, *rumbringu*, and *djinapang*.

In this brief description of Macassan contact on the Australian mainland, we have been able to note only a few of the "high-lights", and little about the praus they came in, about the people themselves, or the way in which they collected their trepang and pearl-shell. The Macassan settlements on the coast, with their daily life and activities, and the homely details of their voyages, would suffice to fill a volume in themselves.

## CHAPTER 7

### TO THE WESTERN ISLES

At the end of the monsoonal season, when the south-east winds began to blow, the Indonesian fleets prepared for their journey back to the western islands of the Archipelago. Praus were overhauled, sails mended, frayed ropes spliced and made secure, and the tall masts were erected ready for departure. Aborigines today know dozens of nautical terms referring to the various parts of a prau, with their functions and method of handling. Some of these praus were apparently quite large, with cabins, and rails edging the deck. They had one main mast, and two others used for "straightening" the sails. On deck, besides the steering wheel, they carried an oven or fire-place on a base of stone or sand.

When everything had been stored away and the crew was safely aboard, while the sails were gradually unfurled, the prayer-man climbed to the very top of the mast and began to chant. The whole deck was a hive of activity. Men were climbing the rigging, and slackening or tightening ropes; the anchor was being weighed; piles of wood were being securely roped down on deck; and the cook was stoking his fire, cooking rice and preparing fish. In the midst of all this were the Macassan captain and his mate, walking the deck and issuing orders above the chattering of the crew. The squawking of fowls, dislodged from the rigging and flying from one end of the prau to the other, added to the general impression of chaos. And from the settlement itself came the mourning songs and wailing of the Aborigines, farewelling their friends in the traditional manner.

Among the crew of these praus were Aborigines being taken to the East India Islands.<sup>1</sup> Those of them who returned to their homeland liked to talk of their journey through the islands to Macassar, and around the camp fires stories were told and songs were composed about what they had seen. Thus a song cycle belonging to the Gumaidj language group describes the settlements of the Macassans and their journeys along the North Australian coast, as well as details of the trip to the Celebes, and the sights that were to be seen in Macassar, and other towns on adjacent islands.

One detailed Aboriginal map begins the journey at Groote Eylandt and continues it north and west along the mainland, past Woodah Island and Blue Mud Bay to Cape Shield, and on to Trial Bay, Caledon Bay, Port Bradshaw, Melville Bay, Cape Wilberforce, Arnhem Bay and the English Company Islands, and Elcho Island, which the Macassans called Djelalapu. From this point the praus made use of two routes. Sometimes they sailed north-east as far as the middle of the Wessels, then west-north-west to Aru (Aroe) Island, and west through the East India Islands to the Celebes. Or they continued on through Cadell Strait, along the coast to Milingimbi in the Crocodile Islands, past Cape Stewart to the Goulburn Islands, known as Lal, and then north-west to the Celebes. When a customs dépôt was set up at Bowen Strait, during the last phase of Macassan contact, many of the praus went through the Straits to Croker Island and on to Port Essington, then struck north-west into the Arafura Sea.

After leaving the mainland they came first to Jitara, an unidentified island where coconut trees and bamboo were growing, but no people were seen. From here they went on to Djau-wuldjauwul, an inhabited island with similar vegetation, and then to Tanimara (the Tanimbar or Timor Laoet Islands), to Bulatjeisa, and through a long passage of sea skirting or calling at Liti (Leti), Weti (or Wetar), and Alor, to Njumanga (or Jumanga) and finally Macassar. They also went off the main track to Roti, Kupang or Dudama (Koepang), and Bundana (Banda).

Many other place names are listed, especially those associated with the country around the port of Macassar. But just as important are the islands of Jitara, Weti and Liti. At Liti, so the Aborigines say, there are rows of huts or houses, with gardens in which sugar-cane is grown. In one drawing of Liti coconut trees are shown, and boat building is in progress at the wharf. It was here too that visiting Aborigines saw their first elephants, and remarked on the "big teeth (tusks) protruding from their nostrils". Around the port of Macassar, or on islands nearby, are numbers of places and people about whom the Aborigines sing: Kamadumul, Leileiia, Dundina, Kalidju, Dumbul, Kaiilji, Warung, Punumbungu, Wara, Kwailinga, Naninga, Dangarpara, Wainginarar, Pirindjingar, Dalwul'lura, Marariga, Nalbinja, Kailbringa, Nainingarar, and many others.

These, then, were the original trading courses of the Indonesian traders, which they followed through the years until their final trips in 1907. For comparison with these, described in a traditional song cycle from the neighbourhood of Yirrkalla, here is the story of a journey which a living Elcho Islander took to Macassar as a boy, in about 1895 or thereabouts. The arrangement and style, although not the content, have been slightly modified to simplify reading. "Sit-down" Charley, whose native name is Djaladjari, injured his spine during a fall while working on a prau, and has been for many years unable to stand or to walk: he moves about the camp by dragging himself along with his hands.

Djaladjari tells his story:

'I first saw the Macassans when I was a little boy living at Cape Wilberforce: I was with my father then, and he could speak Malay. We went on board a prau while it was anchored at Baraku. But my father left me with my father's father, and went on with the traders to Melville Bay, to Mangalei in Caledon Bay, and to Djalargitjbi in Trial Bay. Later on I went with my father, and we worked for the Macassans at Pupabaidju (near Trial Bay), but there wasn't much trepang; so we moved on to Cape Shield, at Limbadjaua. Then we went on to Woodah Island, or Deimundu as they called it, working at trepaning.'

I was about nine or ten when we came to Port Langdon (Djarakbi), on Groote Eylandt. Jadjung was the captain of that boat; his mate was Dandruwung, or Deindjadi as we called him, and the name of the prau was Kandu'ulang.

'From Djarakbi we went back to Libabandria, Melville Bay. We worked there under Deindjadi, but didn't take much trepang because we already had a lot from Groote. The south-east winds were beginning to blow; we put up our sails and went on to Daitjnguru, the English Company Islands. We anchored in the Malay Road at the mouth of the Cape Wilberforce passage, then went on and anchored again at Djelalabu, in the Cadell Straits. Next day we went on to Dakarma, Elcho Island; and at the spring near where the Mission station is now we took on board a good supply of fresh water.

'That same night we went straight on to Marungga Island, in the Crocodile Islands group, and then on to Manggarlta, Goulburn Island. We anchored at Wiala (Wyalla, on the South Island). Next day we continued along the coast to Darudja, half way between Goulburn Island and Malay Bay. There was a white man here, Alfred Brown,<sup>2</sup> who had some bullocks near Port Essington: he sold the hides and horns to the Macassans. This man could talk trade-Macassan and one of the Aboriginal dialects; we traded tortoise-shell with him for drink, and bought calico and food.

'Then we left Brown behind, and went on through Bowen Straits to the next bay, Limbumitera, or Blue Mud Bay (between Port Essington and Cape Don). Here the Macassans used mangrove bark to "colour" the trepang they had collected, making it better for selling in Macassar. When this was done they stored it away on board the praus, and weighed anchor. There were three boats in our lot, although there were many others as well.

'I was on Jadjung's prau, where Deindjadi was mate; and now, as we were ready to go, the captain of the other two boats, named Wonabadi, began to argue with my boss. Deindjadi didn't want to take me to Macassar, but Wonabadi did. The two of them argued and shouted and threatened each other with knives. At last they decided that Deindjadi would pay me off, and I was to leave him and go with Wonabadi. So my old

boss gave me a bag of rice, some *djunggalul* mixed coconut and sugar, *kalagu* (three bunches of coconuts), white and blue striped calico, some Macassan "starch" for calico (possibly soap), a knife with a curved handle, and a coconut-leaf basket of tobacco. I left his prau and went on to Wonabadi's, which was called Batadjowa. Jadjung, the captain on my old boat, came with me, leaving Deindjadi, who had been the mate before, to be captain there. Wonabadi's mate was named Bunggalumpo, and they had coloured their trepang earlier at Elcho Island.

'We spread our sails and went north-westwards, going outside and above Djowadjowa, Melville Island (in the traditional version this island is said to be further out, and not near the mainland). On our way through the sea we came to Djadja Island, but didn't stop for water; and we went on to a big island whose name I do not remember, that stretched across the sea like a mainland (possibly Timor Laoet). At last we came to Liti or Leiti (Leti) Island, where we dropped anchor; and here we loaded more stores and fresh food that Wonabadi, our boss, had bought with trepang. It was on Liti that we saw *balanda* for the first time (*Belanda*, Dutch, the word being a corruption of Hollander, but used by the Aborigines to refer to all Europeans). Among them were Macassans and Javanese from Djava (Java), and many other people. We walked about the town with its houses, just the same as Darwin, and there were coconut trees too.

'After about two days we left the port, and sailed to Danangigi Island. There were more houses there, and the people were the same as those at Liti; there were people from Djava there too. We stopped there one day, and weighed anchor that night; we sailed on fast through a smooth sea, and saw no land until we came to Lant'djau Island. We passed this place, and then Jitara Island. (It will be noticed that the traditional version mentions this island as being the first observed on the way out from the Australian mainland, but the latter account is possibly correct.) We passed Keidjiri Island, too, without stopping.

'Then we came to the big island of Madada, and to another called Laga, and further on to Bandei. From there by climbing to the top of the mast we could see Danagigi (Tanakeke

Island, south of Macassar), called by the same name as the one we had passed before. This is the land of the Macassar men. Our prau swung around and came to Kalugubudu, a smaller island covered with coconuts (*kalugu* means 'coconut'), then we went on to Panumbunga, and passed by to anchor at Kambu'malagu. The town of Macassar was before us. . . .

This record of Djaladjari's journey to the East Indies is a particularly valuable one, and is the only one of its kind available. There is a flavour of romance about his whole trip. He is an adventurer, travelling to the islands from which so many of his peoples' trade goods have come, along a course already detailed in his clan's traditional songs; and he comes at last to a place that his people have glamourised, and in which some of them have even made their homes.

Before passing on to the next Chapter, let us describe an Aborigine's trip on a Malay boat to an island above the Wessels.

Walaliba was an old man, now dead, who belonged to the Wessel Islands; and his son is Mugawaldoi, now in Darwin. This old man was taken on board a Malay prau by the Bugadji (Bugis) people, who were trading thereabouts.

'After about three and a half days on board, we came to an island (probably in the Aru, or Aroe, Islands), where the people were called Mukar (possibly from Maikoor, or Maykor, Island). The coast was thickly covered with bamboo clumps, and there was no beach in sight. We sailed down a river for anchoring, and the bamboos were like spears at each side; we had to cut them down, with other trees, to make a place for bringing in the boat. Then we cut a track through the bamboos to the inner beach, although we had anchored behind the bamboos. We began to cut firewood for loading on to the boat, and while we were doing this one of the Mukar natives saw us. He said to the others, "I have to go down to meet these men (referring to Walaliba and some other Australian Aborigines who were employed in the prau), because they look the same colour as us."

'So the Mukar man came down to where we were cutting wood, and looked at me. And I asked him, "Where are you from?" And he answered me *in my language*. When I heard him speaking I was very much surprised. "Why," I said to myself,



FIG. 4a. Chapelle Hill near Chilanga Mission.

FIG. 4b. Limestone rocks from the Chapelle Mission.





Plate 5: Drawing:  
Melville Bay  
during Indonesian  
contact.

"he is talking the same language as I am." He was surprised, too, to hear me talk his language; it sounded just like the Wessel Islands' dialects, called Berangu, Gunbiri, and Geiambu.

'So we were both very pleased. We began to talk to each other, comparing our customs, and we found that many of them were the same—like the stingray-tipped spear that we use, and our burial rites. When we had finished talking, we left each other, saying, "I leave you now, and I will return home and tell this story about your people, and how we talk the same way."

'After we had loaded all the wood, the prau left the island and returned to the Wessels and left me there with my people; and I told them all this story. . . .'

This strange tale, which the Aborigines insist is entirely true, would suggest that there is some connection between the people of Mukar and the Aborigines of the Wessel Islands. A comparative study of the languages and customs of these two groups has yet to be made by anthropologists, and unfortunately the Wessels people are now almost extinct. It is interesting to notice, however, that the Wunumbai people of Aru Islands<sup>3</sup> used to expose the bodies of their dead on a raised stage until they decomposed, just as so many of the northern Arnhem Land people do—a comparison which Walaliba has made in his story.

Should there be any serious foundation for Walaliba's assumptions other than the similarity of a few cultural traits, it is tempting to speculate on the diffusion of northern Arnhem Land customs and beliefs, and on early migration to these regions: but later on, perhaps, more evidence may be available.

## CHAPTER 8

### MACASSAR

The Aborigines' picture of the port of Macassar itself is confused and mixed with details of other places in that area, such as Leti. And the name Macassar is often used as a general term, in reference to all the East Indian Islands and people. Even "Sit-down" Charley Djaladjari's account is by no means elaborate.

Djaladjari continues his tale.

‘. . . When we reached Kambu'malagu, the port of the Macassans, the big *bunggauwa* “boss” named Karei (“King”) Deintumbo Buga came down to the wharf. He brought with him *djura*, paper, which had on it many *darabu* marks (writing), and on this he wrote down what my boss Wonabadi told him about our cargo. Then Wonabadi said to him “I've got some boys here”—referring to my companions and to myself.

“All right,” Deintumbo replied. “I'll take all these men, and they can come to my place to sleep and have food.” He gave us money, and we went with him.

‘Near where I stayed several countrymen of mine (Aborigines) were living. There was Jamaduda from the English Company Islands, who had come to Macassar as a small boy. He had worked there, and never returned home. When I saw him he was a grown man: he had married a Macassan woman, and had four sons and four daughters. Then there was Gadari, a Wonguri-Mandjigai man from Arnhem Bay; he had come as a young man, worked there, and married a Macassan woman. When I met him he was middle aged and had a lot of children there, but I heard afterwards that he had died. He had been

married to an Aboriginal woman before he had left the Australian mainland, and Duda is his son; but he didn't return to his wife. I saw Birindjauwi, too; he was still unmarried when I left Macassar. I met a Ngeimil man, and many others as well. In the old days, before I went there, young unmarried men who came with the praus would often get married to Macassan women and stop there; but usually the married men return home next season with the trading fleets. Sometimes young Aboriginal girls went to Macassar, too, but most of them stayed there to marry Indonesians or to work about the town.

'Well, the next day we came down to the prau from Deintumbo's place, and unloaded the trepang. When Wonabadi had sold it all he paid the crew, and they were able to buy clothes, axes, tobacco and grog. We had a good time, and a lot of drink, and slept with some Macassan girls. . . .

'We saw so many things that is hard to remember them now. There were the *balanda* white men, with horses and carts and big houses and strange looking clothes. But we also saw the *wuramu* "Crook Men", just like those we sing about in the Macassan Song Cycle. These people came down from the mountains behind Macassar from Bamundju and from the country of Stinkibadu: they used to come down to rob the townspeople, and set fire to the houses. . . .

'At last some of the Macassans and Balanda caught these *wuramu* and put them in gaol at Kantaru, where the *wubada* policemen killed them. But the leaders of the *wuramu* were never caught.

'Well, at Kambu'malagu there were stone houses, where the *bunggauwa* lived (the "bosses", or the Balanda Europeans). The prau captain Jadjung lived at Kambu'tumbu, and Deintumbo at Kambu'basi (or -batji). Bunggasinga's place was at Kambu'kalasu, and the Chinamen lived at Kambu'djinga. At Kambu'maleiju a number of Malays and Macassans lived under a headman called Dara; at Kambu'biru was the Madi *bunggauwa*, who was a "Macassan"; and at Kambu'guda, on the plain country near the lily swamps, lived Pupadjin, a Macassan prau headman who had been to the English Company Islands. Mitjindi, another Macassan *bunggauwa*, was at Limbu'timbarun or Limbu'katuwung, and

there were others at Wara. At Ranguwa were the *urarangu bunggauwa* (possibly a derivation of the Malayan word *orang*, a person); these people lived not far from the beach. At Kambu'-dadi, a flat place, there was a lily swamp like those back in our country, with a creek along which people used to sit; these were mostly Kupang (Koepang) people mixed with "Japanese". There were too many people, and I couldn't see them all. They had *bimbi* (nannygoats), *didung* (buffaloes), *djangadjanga* (fowls) and plenty of *paiawul* (eggs).

'Near Macassar we went to the small island of Leiileii (Lei-leia), where they grow rice in large gardens, to the island of Gundingari where there are more gardens, and to Djamaluna island with its gardens and large water tanks.

'I went out with the praus from Macassar, to visit the islands to the west and north-west; and we saw Putalambu, the "mainland" as we called it, which is a long way north-west of Macassar. Here we saw the Babuwa people, who looked like "half-castes", making calico. In our journeys we went to Bandei (or Banda Island), not far from the Aru Islands, and to Manggarei, north-west of Macassar, where there is plenty of tobacco. But then we came back to Macassar.

'I stopped there for one *maiwudu* (translated as "Christmas"), and one day my boss told us to start work. There were big tanks, in which we boiled syrup; and when this was ready we poured it into lengths of hollow bamboo, which we loaded on board. We put in stores of other goods and food-stuffs too, like rice, coconuts, *wadji* (rice and coconut in syrup), *daribu* rice biscuits, bananas, *djungalul* (rice soaked in water and dried in the sun, not the same as sweet coconut *djunggalul*), white sugar, *kula* (dark sugar), *djakuldjakul* (black and white grain, possibly sago), *santang* (like damper bread), peanuts, *dibuwang* (rather like taro), *lamikaiju* (a variety of potato), *djindulul* (meat balls in flour batter), mangoes, tamarinds, pumpkins, and *birali* (wheat or barley). When all these things were loaded on the praus, we weighed anchor, and returned the same way that we had come. And at last we reached the mainland of Australia. . . .'

This story tells us something of the places seen by an Aboriginal voyager to Macassar. He is impressed by the variety of

peoples, and by the towns, the gardens, and the wide range of food, which he finds especially attractive. He meets his own countrymen, some of whom are prepared to spend their lives in an alien port with foreign wives. He returns to his Arnhem Land camp with great stories to tell — tales which will be repeated in generations to come.

Djaladjari says little about the Balandia Europeans. However, it is possible that the Arnhem Landers first heard of these people either from the Macassan traders themselves, or from their countrymen who had travelled to Macassar. The word Balandia, although it seems to be a derivative of "Hollander", has also been translated as "one who kicks". It is said that this term is comparatively recent, and that the old word for "white people" was Duwang, meaning "a large expanse of whiteness". Another term used by the Macassans to refer to Europeans, according to north-eastern Arnhem Landers, was *gwunjara*. But apparently, during their trips to the East India Islands, the Aborigines saw little of them.

The traditional songs are full of descriptions of life in the islands, and the varied activities of men and women. One drawing sets out the relative positions of the different islands of the Celebes, with canoes and praus sailing between them. The big Macassan headmen or prau bosses are shown smoking their long pipes; and rows of men, drawn and named, represent some of the Aborigines who have been there. Another drawing depicts "Macassar", represented by a round circle of islands. A mountain symbolizes the place from which the *wuramu* "Crook Men" came. Houses are outlined, and names are given to some white men and women: for example, Balubalu and Baluga are European men, and Djugudjugu and Baludjugu are two European women. At Leiileii is shown the house of the "King" or Rajah, known as Karei Djina, Gumanda, Kareindalu or Mudeinga. Aborigines say that this man can send boats to the Australian mainland, and make all the people work for him.

The port of Macassar in 1856, as described by A. R. Wallace,<sup>1</sup> must have looked much the same as it did when the Aborigines came there on their visits: and we include something of it here, as a background to Charley Djaladjari's story.

" . . . The town consists chiefly of one long, narrow street, along the sea-side, devoted to business, and principally occupied by the Dutch and Chinese merchants' offices and warehouses, and the native shops or bazars. This extends northward for more than a mile, gradually merging into native houses, often of a most miserable description, but made to have a neat appearance by being all built up exactly to the straight line of the street, and being generally backed by fruit-trees. This street is usually thronged with a native population of Bugis and Macassar men, who wear cotton trowsers about twelve inches long . . . and the universal Malay sarong, of gay checked colours. . . . Parallel to this street run two short ones, which form the old Dutch town, and are enclosed by gates. These consist of private houses, and at their southern end is the fort . . . and a road at right angles to the beach, containing the houses of the Governor and of the principal officials. Beyond the fort again, along the beach, is another long street of native huts and many country-houses of the tradesmen and merchants. All around extend the flat rice-fields. . . ."

We have mentioned the importance of Macassar as a trading centre; and for centuries that town could almost be described (without its religious connotation) as the Mecca of the north-east Arnhem Landers. As Wallace has mentioned,<sup>2</sup> Macassar was one of the great emporiums of native trade of the East Indian Archipelago. Rattans from Borneo, sandal-wood and beeswax from Flores and Timor, trepang from the Gulf of Carpentaria, cajeput-oil from Bouru, wild nutmegs and mussoi-bark from New Guinea, were all to be found in the stores of the Chinese and Bugis merchants of Macassar, together with the rice and coffee which were the chief products of the surrounding country. More important than all these, however, stated Wallace in 1856, was the trade to the Aru Islands, south-west of New Guinea, of which virtually all the produce came in native vessels to Macassar.

A feature which seems to have captured the imagination of Aboriginal visitors to this town was the *wuramu*. It has some

importance today in their traditional songs, and has inspired an interesting ceremony common to all north-eastern Arnhem Land.<sup>3</sup>

*Wuramu* is the male figure, *bagura* the female, and they are known generally as *walidawalida*. This *wuramu* is a "crook", "collection" or "stealing" man. He has been identified at times with Dutch customs officials, who came down to the wharf to collect their dues from the Macassan trepang fleets when they arrived from the north Australian coast.

But sometimes, as in Djaladjari's tale, the original *wuramu* are said to have been "wild" natives from the hills who came down to the Macassan villages on plundering expeditions. They robbed the houses, murdered those who opposed them, and set fire to huts and dwellings while their inmates were asleep. Some Aborigines say that these pillaging *wuramu* were the spirits of dead Macassans.

However, the wooden *wuramu* figure that the north-eastern Arnhem Landers carve today is possibly derived from certain Macassan burial rites, described by Aborigines who had witnessed them when visiting the East Indian Islands, or had seen them on the Australian mainland.

These Aborigines say that when a Macassan dies, a *djira* grave-yard is made, and a hole dug in the ground. After the burial, the officiating Macassan sings; the others wait quietly, and when he has finished they all reply *djilalji! djilalji!*

Then the *wuramu* post is placed on the grave; it is carved to represent the dead man, and symbolises his spirit. All the Macassans dance for him in a special way, bending forward in a ring with their buttocks to the post, eyes closed and heads bowed. Then they open their eyes and sing; and this continues for several hours.

Before the post is set up the man who made it, in company with his friends, takes it to each of the surrounding camps. All the food, tobacco, cloth or goods lying about is collected and becomes his property, in payment for his services; and it is for this reason that the figure is termed the "Collection Man".

These *wuramu* belong to the *jiritja* moiety, and especially to certain clans who are said to have come first into contact with

the alien groups, and so obtained a temporary monopoly of their trade. Today, the "old" and indigenous ritual and songs belong principally to the *dua* clans, while the ritual, ceremony and songs of the *jiritja* clans deal mainly with themes that discuss the contact of alien peoples, like the Baijini, Malays, Macassans, New Guinea and Torres Straits Islanders, Japanese and Europeans.

As well as the traditional *wuramu* posts and figures, these Aborigines say that they can make representations of any Macassan, European, or "Mixed-Blood". "We can make any white man or Macassan," they say, "just like you take photographs. We do it by using our mind first, and then we carve." In some rare instances, these figures are used as grave posts, imitating the Macassan practice. A carved figure of a Macassan or a Badu (Torres Strait) Islander, for instance, could be erected as a kind of memorial to a dead *jiritja* man or woman; but this would have to be related to his particular totemic clan song cycle. More commonly, the *wuramu* figure is used in a "Collection" ceremony.

This is enacted in daylight, in the main camp. Long feathered strings are fastened to the shoulders of the figure to represent arms, since these are lacking in the traditional style of *wuramu*. The artist and his companions are singing the special cycle of songs; and when they arrive at the part that deals with the *wuramu* himself, news spreads through the camp that the "Crook" man is coming. Everyone knows what this means; and people run frantically to and fro, laughing and excited, attempting to hide their clothing, spears, knives, food and tobacco, and especially the belongings that they value most. Nothing is safe, except inside the huts themselves or among the leafy branches, for *wuramu* is a "stealing" man ready to pick up anything he finds lying about.

The singing grows louder, and now the *wuramu* comes into the camp for the first time. The artist holds the figure upright in front of him, and the others stretch out its string "arms" ready to seize whatever it finds. So the *wuramu* party moves through the camp, picking up anything of value to be seen.

After they have been through all the camps they make a large

central heap of everything they have found: and the *wuramu* stands in the ground, his arms resting on the heap. The *jiritja* singing man, and the didjeridoo player in the *wuramu* party, sing part of the Macassan song cycle; and when this is completed the artist shares with his companions the goods that they have collected.

Unfortunately, we have not room to dwell on so many other aspects of the influence which Indonesian contact had on the culture of northern Arnhem Land.

Baijini association gave to the Aborigines of the north-east coast a glimpse of other lands and other people, and paved the way for the more intensive contact of the Macassans. These traders introduced the Aborigines to a much wider range of personal and cultural experience, showing them something of the outside world. The limits of their horizon were thus increasingly extended, and their individual perspective broadened.

This state of affairs was more apparent in north-eastern than in western Arnhem Land. In the west, perhaps because the pearl-shell and trepang beds were less rich than in the east, early Macassan contact does not seem to have been so intensive.

## CHAPTER 9

### THE WIDENING WORLD

When did the Arnhem Landers first begin to realise that there were in the World people other than themselves? Apart from the events of the mythological period, when great Ancestral Beings like the Djanggawul and Laintjung came to the Australian mainland, and apart from Baijini contact, it is possible that for countless centuries they had been aware that people of some kind existed beyond the seas.

There is the likelihood, too, that isolated alien people have drifted occasionally because of storms, or in search of adventure, to the north coast. "Spirit canoes" that are washed up on the beaches receive some attention in traditional stories of north-eastern Arnhem Land. And every year at the close of the wet monsoonal season, when the wind blows from the east and north-east before swinging to the south, hundreds of coconuts, pieces of driftwood and broken canoes are washed up on to the coast. While we were working in this area large outrigger canoes called *birugiru*, badly damaged, but carved at the prow and along the sides, were washed up at Port Bradshaw and at Cape Arnhem; and the Aborigines regarded these as being nothing at all out of the ordinary.

Many years ago a canoe full of native women was washed ashore at Blue Mud Bay. They were distributed without loss of time among the men who had found them, and from them some people today trace their descent. It is said that they were originally from Groote Eylandt, and were out fishing one day when a storm came up and drove them out to sea: they drifted for some time before at last they reached the mainland. Similar

events have taken place, on a smaller scale, within more recent years.

Traditional drawings show "spirit canoes", some of them fairly large hulks, which were brought in by the waves along the north-eastern coast. The Aborigines called the people in them Wuramala. "They were really people who have been here," they say, "but we call them spirit men and women." Sometimes these people were killed, but more often they settled down to routine tribal life with the Aborigines.

Such incidents were relatively few and far between, and had apparently little effect on indigenous belief and behaviour. But they did serve to keep these Arnhem Landers constantly aware that they were not living an isolated existence. With the coming of the Baijini, this awareness was intensified; but it was not until the visits of the first Macassan traders that their perspective was appreciably widened.

We have seen in other Chapters how the Arnhem Landers came to know something of the different peoples living on the islands of the East India Archipelago. It was in this way, too, that they were able to learn something of the islands to the north-east, between Cape York and New Guinea: for the Macassans travelled down through the East Indian Islands and along the southern coast to Papua, visiting the Torres Strait Islands on their trading expeditions. Wallace<sup>1</sup> has mentioned that the Goram people (an island on the east of Ceram) were a race of traders (at the time of his writing; that is, about 1860). Every year they visited the Tenimber (Tanimbar), Ke (Kai or Ewab) and Aru (Aroe) Islands, the whole north-west coast of New Guinea from Getanata to Salwatty, and the islands of Waigiou and Mysol. They extended their voyages to Tidore and Ternate, as well as to Banda and Amboyna (Amboina). Their praus were made by the Ke Islanders, and they sold their goods to the Bugi traders at Ceram Laut or Aru.

Aborigines returning to the mainland brought back with them, as usual, stories of what they had seen; and these were incorporated in the traditional Badu Song Cycle of some hundreds of songs, completing the great *jiritja* moiety trilogy that deals with Baijini, Macassan and Baduan contact and ideas. At just what

period these coastal natives first heard of the Torres Straits Islands we cannot be sure, but it seems to have been some time after the initial Macassan contact.

At the end of last century and the beginning of this, their knowledge was extended and clarified, through contact with Torres Strait Islanders who were employed as crews on European and Japanese boats, engaged in trepanning along the Northern Territory coast. Moreover, within recent years the Methodist Missions in these parts, as well as the Groote Eylandt station of the Church Missionary Society, had natives of Torres Strait origin attached to their staff. (Mornington Island Aborigines, from the Wellesley Islands group, were also brought by trading and other boats to Groote and the eastern coast of Arnhem Land.) But this later contact with these Torres Strait Islanders must not be confused with the early association, which resulted in the extensive range of traditional songs, and in the belief that an island somewhere in the Torres Straits was the ultimate home of the *jiritja* moiety dead.

The Aborigines called the Torres Strait Islands and the southern coast of New Guinea by the collective term "Badu" or "Bad'dwu", apparently derived from Badu Island (Mulgrave Island), adjacent to Banks Island. This island is also called by the Aborigines Mudilnga, and there is occasionally some confusion here with an unidentified island said to be away "past the top of the Wessels". The old people around Yirrkalla called New Guinea "Makarngu", meaning "another end".

But the term "Badu" tended to supersede the old names for this region, during the period of late contact with Europeans and Torres Strait Islanders. "Badu", in the old days, was known by many names, each of which signified an island inhabited by spirits of the dead: Gurari, Djinimara, Banda (not to be confused with the Banda in the East India Archipelago), Bandaijil, Dumbu, Wauwura, Mudilnga, Ngareijari, Walmandji, Ngalparari, Malalwalpan, Wara, Lungarang, Ngalgunmai, Bulul'djeidja, and so on. It is by some of these terms, and others as well, that Badu is referred to in the Song Cycle and in the stories. And a number of these are sometimes confused with names referring to places in the East Indies.<sup>2</sup>

But in spite of the fact that some of these Aborigines had visited Badu, and learned something about the people, this contact does not seem to have influenced them to any extent as the Baijini and Macassan contact did. The Aborigines were apparently content to regard Badu, inhabited by people whom they considered to be not unlike themselves, as a resting place for their *jiritja* dead.

The Badu song cycle describes native villages there among the coconut palms, and beaches that fringe islands with coral reefs and fresh water streams; the local dancing, and building of huts; strange foods, and the animals and fish that are caught. The islanders are credited with sending the north and north-east clouds and wind over to the mainland people. And the coconuts, cones and pods, breadfruit, timber, and occasional canoes that wash up on to the coastal beaches at the close of the wet season are said to have been provided by the Spirits from Badu. The Aborigines appreciate the coconuts, which often are still edible: from the canoe wood they make sacred *rangga* emblems: and children play with the "nuts" from the long hard pods. Songs tell how these gifts are sent by the *jiritja* dead and by Spirit Beings to their living relatives on the Australian mainland, and come tossing on the waves until they reach the various bays and beaches to which they have been consigned.

It seems likely, then, that the north-east Arnhem Landers had in the past some knowledge concerning "Badu" natives, however inaccurate this may have been. Contact with the Indonesians had extended their horizons, enabling them to formulate certain impressions of "Badu" and its people. When later on Torres Strait Islanders were brought to the north coast by Europeans and Japanese, some features of the "Badu" song cycle were probably elaborated. And all the islands of the Torres Straits, as well as the southern coast of New Guinea, were often, for convenience, described under the collective heading of "Badu".<sup>3</sup>

This classification thus divided the alien world as known to the Aborigines into two categories. To the north-east was the "Badu" area, while to the north-west was "Macassar", which they frequently used as a general name for the Celebes and the surrounding islands.

The Arnhem Landers probably came into contact with "Badu" people through their association with Macassans: that is, through working on their ships as members of the crew, and going with the Macassans to the Torres Straits. Apparently this took place before these islands were seriously affected by European colonisation, so that the Aborigines were able to observe something of their culture before it finally collapsed towards the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> They were interested by what they saw, and included much of it in their own songs: and these in the course of years developed into a Cycle. In the same way, Spirits from the Australian mainland were projected into the "Badu" theme, or other Spirits were inspired by the alien people themselves: and so the idea of the *jiritja* Home of the Dead grew and became established.

The Aborigines had a much clearer conception of "Macassar" than of "Badu", for their visits there were more frequent, and seem to have made a greater impression on their minds. The factor of trade was important too, in this respect, and they came to know many of the Macassans more or less intimately. But the "Badu" people had no economic or other relations with the mainlanders, who based such knowledge as they had of them chiefly on observation.

The "Badu" cycle nevertheless involved some extension of their everyday local interests, and marked another step in their introduction to new and alien ideas. The way in which these "Badu" elements have been incorporated, however inaccurately from a factual point of view, shows us how receptive, relatively speaking, was the cultural life of the north coastal Aborigines.

The drift of occasional alien people to the mainland coast finds mention in various "Badu" stories, relating how people in "Spirit Canoes" have landed or been washed up on the beaches with north-east tides that carry the coconuts. Spasmodic as this contact may have been, it should not be underestimated in a region such as this, for it may perhaps have served to introduce certain features of modern Aboriginal behaviour and belief.

The traditional history of the eastern and western Arnhem Landers gives us no clue to the first isolated visits of Europeans, such as the Dutch and Portuguese, but possibly these have lost

their identity among the numerous references to boats or "Spirit Canoes". The Aborigines say however that many years ago, possibly during the first half of the nineteenth century, a Chinese boat called at Cape Arnhem. The crew came ashore to cut wood, but when the Aborigines at last tried to get in touch with them the visitors hastily abandoned their task and fled to their boat. Another vessel of the same kind was seen in that area a little later, with a crew of natives whom the Aborigines could not identify. This, too, quickly set sail and made off when the Aborigines appeared.

There is no mention of Europeans in this region until the last phase of Macassan contact, although we know that several travelled along the north coast and actually landed at various points. Until then the Indonesians had been the main visitors, and other aliens who did come were considered by the Aborigines as relatively unimportant. In fact, it has been said that the Aborigines first heard about the Europeans from the Indonesian traders, and first saw them during their visits to Macassar.

When a customs dépôt was set up in Bowen Straits, between the Cobourg Peninsula and Croker Island, the Macassans apparently felt that their days of trading along the north Australian coast were numbered. At about this time they told the north-east Arnhem Landers: "Go back into the bush out of the way of the *gwunjara* (Europeans), for they might come and fight us (that is, the Macassans)." Between 1884 and 1907, when the Macassan traders were finally prohibited from visiting the north coast, the Aborigines tell of white men in boats who "fought" the Macassans, and eventually forced them to leave the mainland. This quite possibly refers to the trips of Alfred Searcy and other Customs Officials, who in 1883-85 and onwards made seizures of Macassan praus, and levied fines on their captains.<sup>5</sup>

The Aborigines especially remember Djelk'Kwar (Charlie Cooper) and Walparan (E. O. Robinson, a revenue officer on the north coast), as the first Europeans they knew by name. Of course, in western Arnhem Land European contact was relatively intense, with the abortive settlement of such places as Raffles Bay and Port Essington, and the close proximity of Darwin.

The eastern region did not experience this. At first some Europeans accompanied the Macassans on their trips, and were said by the Aborigines to be "spying out the country". Then they came by themselves, with crews of Aborigines from Melville and Bathurst Islands, from the Cobourg Peninsula, and the Goulburn Islands. They preferred to work with their own parties, and made little use of the local people. But at first they were generous with trade goods, food and alcoholic drinks, to appease the Aborigines, and to attract young women.

The old order was changing. The Macassans, forced into open competition with European traders, and finding it necessary to pay heavy custom duties, seem to have become unscrupulous and to have broken many of their time-honoured trading relationships. Drink was used more lavishly as an article of trade, and led directly to numerous quarrels and killings.

At last, in 1907, the Macassan visits ceased altogether. In their stead came the European and Japanese trepangers, pearlys and beachcombers—men who were interested mainly in obtaining a large turnover in the shortest possible time, with the minimum of trouble and expense to themselves. The great trading days of the Arnhem Landers had drawn to a close. Some of these Europeans, or "half-castes" as a number were termed, are still remembered by the Aborigines. Most of them are, of course, unidentified: Warikilia, for instance, Rob, Samsun (or Tomson), Samso (a "Malay"), Dick, Djak (or Jack; European-Malay), and so on.

At first the Aborigines were hostile to these intruders. They had driven away their trading partners, taken employment out of their hands, stopped the flow of trade goods, and even refused to observe certain time-honoured laws and customs. They seduced the Aboriginal women, but did not fulfil any of the obligations that relations of this kind usually involved. What was more, they belonged to a culture that seemed to be very different from that of their old friends the Indonesians, and even more strikingly unlike that of the Aborigines themselves.

These people of Arnhem Land had much to learn in the coming years, and there was no one to teach them. They were in some measure prepared for this intensive and widely differing cultural clash. They could even understand it up to a point,

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because of their previous knowledge of other forms of contact, with the Baijini and with the Macassan.

But this adjustment would take time: and during the process the Aborigines themselves would feel restless and unsettled. They would be ready to find fault with the new order. They would try to defend their territory against the intruder, and to right the injustices which, in their opinion, they suffered. We shall see something of this in the Chapters that follow.

## CHAPTER 10

### THE MACASSANS ON THE NORTH COAST

We have already discussed, from the viewpoint of the Aborigines themselves, something of their contact with alien groups along the Arnhem Land coast. Let us turn now to documentary evidence from European sources concerning these Macassan visitors.

Apparently it was not until as late as 1803, when Captain Mathew Flinders<sup>1</sup> met some Macassan traders in the Malay Road between Cape Wilberforce and Bromby Isles, that the Western world came to hear of this contact.

At this place he found six vessels, covered over like hulks as if laid up for the wet season. Six Malay commanders came over in a canoe and boarded Flinders' ship, and their Malay cook acted as an interpreter. The chief of the six praus was a short elderly man named Pobassoo, who said that there were upon the coast in different divisions sixty praus, and that Salloo was the commander-in-chief. These people were Mohammedans, but they had no objection to drinking wine. Five other praus came steering into the Malay Road from the south-west, and anchored close to the other six; nearly every member of the crew wore at his side a short kris.

According to Pobassoo, the sixty praus belonged to the Rajah of Boni and carried about a thousand men. Each prau seemed to be about twenty-five tons, and to contain twenty to twenty-five men. Pobassoo's boat carried two small brass cannon obtained from the Dutch, but the others carried only muskets. Flinders continues with a description of trepang-collecting and preservation, and mentions that a thousand of these sea-slugs

made a picol of about one hundred and twenty-five Dutch pounds, and one hundred picols are a cargo for a prau.

Pobassoo had made six or seven voyages from Macassar to this coast within the preceding twenty years (that is, from 1783–1803), and said (although this does not seem to be correct) that he was one of the first to come, but had never seen any ship there before. He added that they sometimes had skirmishes with the native inhabitants (the Aborigines), and that he himself had been speared in the knee and another man slightly wounded since their arrival on the coast.

According to our chronology, then, the visits of Pobassoo took place towards the end of the first phase of Indonesian-Aboriginal contact. With the coming of the Europeans, to which Flinders' visit served as a prelude, Macassan contact began a second phase that lasted until 1907. It was during this time that the traditional trading relationships between the Indonesians and the Aborigines became seriously strained.

Pobassoo placed the first Macassan contact as taking place about one hundred and seventy years ago; Professor Warner supports this, but adds that it is highly likely that such trade had been going on long before.<sup>2</sup> Searcy<sup>3</sup> asserts that the Malays had been visiting the north coast of Australia for an extensive period, probably for centuries; but he submits no evidence in support of his theory.

In the foregoing Chapters we have seen that the Arnhem Landers, particularly in the north-eastern corner, had been acquainted with various alien people for some considerable time.

Here, since we are dealing with European documents and papers, we can consider only the final phase of Macassan contact, a period of a little over one hundred years from the date of Pobassoo's meeting with Flinders. Even so, there are large gaps in our knowledge—although we do hear that Macassans visited the early settlements of Raffles Bay and Port Essington between the years 1838 and 1849,<sup>4</sup> and possibly Darwin (then called Palmerston) in later years. Earl, writing in 1836,<sup>5</sup> remarks that the Bugis trepang fishers discovered the settlers at Raffles Bay, but were rather suspicious of them, as they could not understand their motive for settling there. The following season, how-

ever, the Bugis gained confidence, and several of their praus remained at the settlement to fish for trepang instead of proceeding further along the coast. The Bugis were induced by the commandant to bring with them, in the following season, various goods produced in the Archipelago, to barter with the British; and many also brought their families with the intention of settling. On their arrival at Raffles Bay however they found, to their great disappointment and loss, that the place had been abandoned during their absence.<sup>6</sup>

We hear nothing more officially of the Indonesian traders until 1872, when the Government Resident at Darwin<sup>7</sup> wrote about the desirability of sending a small official vessel to collect dues from the Malay trepangers. These men, he said, took all their cargoes out of the country and gave them to Chinese traders at Macassar (the Government receiving nothing from all this). And they were accused of collecting pearl-shell to the detriment of European fishermen—that is, they presumably had a monopoly of this particular trade. The same Government Resident recommended a licence fee of £10 or 120 guilders per season. He had apparently made arrangements to send a small vessel to visit the north coast during the north-west monsoon, and observed that it would be necessary to provide this boat with a “six pounder field piece”, as well as small arms. Skirmishes with the Malay traders were evidently expected.

At the same date it was suggested that provision should be made to prevent the Indonesian fishermen from compelling the Aborigines to work for them, or carrying them off the coast.<sup>8</sup>

In 1877 there were more references to this contact.<sup>9</sup> The manager of the Cobourg Cattle Company had sent a letter to the Government Resident in Darwin reporting that serious consequences were likely to arise from the annual visits of the Macassans to the north coast. But the spokesman for the South Australian Government, then administering the Northern Territory, replied that it would be impossible to enforce the payment of a tax on these praus, and he did not see how their visits could be terminated. He suggested that any cases of misbehaviour among the Macassan traders should be reported to the Commanders of Her Majesty's Cruisers, on their visits to Port Darwin.

In 1878 Captain Cadell complained about the Malays on the north coast.<sup>10</sup> Most of the captains, he declared, were bondmen to rich Chinese in Macassar; and they stripped the trepang and pearl-shell beds so thoroughly that many Europeans, such as bêche-de-mer captains like Captain Walton, said it would take them about ten years to recover.

Cadell mentioned the limits of Malayan fishermen as extending from Buccaneer's Archipelago, on the Western Australian coast, to the Pellew Group in the Gulf of Carpentaria. Their intercourse with the Aborigines, he alleged, was of "a baneful" character, because they frequently resorted to paying them with arrack, and most certainly made "confirmed drunkards of them". Cadell later went to Macassar to make enquiries concerning Malayan contact on the Australian north coast.<sup>11</sup>

In 1879 the annual Macassar Fleet visiting the North Australian coast amounted, on Cadell's information, to twenty-three praus. Most of these belonged to three men, one of whom owned more than half. The average complement of men was approximately forty per prau, giving an aggregate of nearly a thousand men for the whole fleet. Most of them were "in bondage", and indebted to their owner at about sixty rupees (then £5) each. The owners said that it took a man six years to free himself; but many of them actually remained "in bondage" for long periods, and Cadell met a man who after over twenty-five years was still more than R.100 in debt.

Cadell's most interesting contribution was his reference to Australian Aborigines living in Macassar, an aspect which has already been mentioned.<sup>12</sup>

In 1878 too, a brief report<sup>13</sup> concerning Macassan contact on this coast was made by a Port Essington resident. The praus came, he said, as far west as Trepang Bay (near Port Essington), and at the time of his writing there had been some sixty to seventy of them. They collected not only trepang but also young timbers, which they took back to the East Indian ports. Smallpox, which had broken out among the local natives, was said to have been brought by these aliens; and he added: "they are also a great nuisance to the settlers as they create disturbances

amongst the blacks and are in the habit of supplying them with liquor in large quantities."

In 1880, the Inspector of Police remarked that the Aborigines were supplied with intoxicating liquor and would do any kind of work, or anything whatsoever, to obtain it. For this craving the Malays visiting the northern coast every year were to blame. "On my recent visit to Port Essington, I obtained from the natives the names of the captains of twenty-one praus who are regularly visiting the coast: each year these praus bring a large quantity of arrack, a strong raw spirit, for the consumption of the natives who work for them. I think it would be advisable to make the captains of these praus obtain licences from here and to pay a fee of say £10 each yearly, which would be a moderate charge, for each of these praus takes annually in trepang, tortoise-shell and building timber an average of about £350 worth from this coast. A heavy penalty should be inflicted on any captain, who should also be liable to be arrested if found fishing without a licence; by doing this they would have to respect the laws of the country and the authorities here, which at present they do not . . ."<sup>14</sup>

At last a Sub-Collector of Customs and Licence Dues was appointed. In 1881 J. A. G. Little, Sub-Collector, wrote concerning the Malays, on information supplied to him by E. O. Robinson, of the Cobourg Cattle Company at Port Essington. Asserting that they brought considerable quantities of rice, tobacco, spirits and other dutiable articles, he asked for a customs officer to be appointed for the Port Essington district, as had been done for the Roper district in 1872, '73 and '74.

In 1882 the matter came up again.<sup>15</sup> A prau was reported to have been wrecked, and then abandoned on Melville Island. The Aborigines had killed a Malay, while one Croker Island native had been killed and another wounded. Jago, the Malay captain, had left the wreck in a canoe, and managed to reach Trepang Bay. He left half of his crew there and went on with the others to Goulburn Island, where there were "a great number of praus". Robinson wrote that: "the niggers all cleared out to the Malays", leaving only two young Aborigines in his camp. And he complained that he could not collect any revenue

for articles supplied to the natives, since the Malays delivered them to the natives on board the prau.

In the same year, the Inspector of Police submitted a report on visiting Malay praus.<sup>16</sup> He addressed the Government Resident "with a view to urging on the Government the advisability to make these people contribute towards the revenue in return for the thousands of pounds worth of property they take away annually, and also to put a check on their wholesale supply of spirits to the Aborigines". The East Alligator, Tor Rock and other inland tribes of natives (of western Arnhem Land)<sup>17</sup> came to the coast every season to visit the Malays, and obtained large quantities of grog and tobacco not only by selling buffalo horns and other products but especially by prostituting their women. Praus were seen in great numbers. Each took away on an average ten tons of trepang, valued at £40 per ton (amounting to £12,000 for the thirty praus noticed on the coast in 1882), as well as tortoise-shell valued at £1,680, and buffalo horns valued at £360—a total of £14,040. They also removed pearls, pearl-shell and timber. Their outlay on leaving Macassar was said to comprise the wages of thirty-four men per vessel, six to eight tons of rice, 300 gallons of spirit, 400 lbs. of tobacco, and a large quantity of coconuts. In most of their bartering with the natives they used spirits and tobacco. "I never knew or heard of a Malay camp where some one was not killed or severely hurt through drink; at one camp in Trepang Bay there were five natives severely wounded through drink . . . and disease is spread among the aborigines . . ."

Then the Inspector sums up the crux of the whole problem: ". . . they demoralize the natives and make them untractable by the amount of drink and disease they distribute, and so effectively crush out the white man who may be trepanning or employ native labour in any other way. The European trepanger on this coast may do fairly well for about four months, but as soon as he gets into full swing, down come the praus and away go all your men and the Europeans must shut up till the Malays go away again." And since the Malays stripped the coast, a European did not find it worth while to work even for these four months.

Here we see the real reason for the growing opposition of the Europeans towards the Malays. Their indignation at the visitors' treatment of the Aborigines was actually a screen for their fear and dislike of economic competition.

The same Inspector of Police suggested a licence of £1 per ton, according to tonnage, on the praus—a measure which would discourage the Malays but not the Europeans. What was more, hundreds of natives could be employed by Europeans in trepanning, pearl fishing and so on, their labour to be paid for chiefly in rice and tobacco, on which duties could be easily collected. The underlying idea, apparently, was to transpose conditions. Instead of the Malayans exploiting the Aborigines it was proposed that Europeans should do so.

In 1883 complaint were made to the Netherlands Government in the East India Archipelago about Malay fishermen supplying liquor to Aborigines along the coast.<sup>18</sup> In the same year, the Government Resident<sup>19</sup> mentioned that several local Europeans intended to engage in pearl fishing activities along the north coast. He added: "At the end of last month the Government cutter 'Flying Cloud' left here for Port Essington, taking Mr Searcy, sub-collector of customs, for the purpose of levying duties on the goods brought annually by the praus from Macassar to this coast . . . a large proportion of the cargoes brought by these vessels consists of spirits, and it is stated that this is afterwards distributed amongst the natives in exchange for turtle, shell, pearls, etc., also as payment for the assistance rendered to the trepang fishers. The natives along the coast, which is frequented by Malays, are considerably marked by smallpox, and are known to suffer from other filthy contagious diseases, all of which are said to be imparted to them by the Malays. It must be admitted that this is a very unsatisfactory state of things to exist in any country, and it will not be until better means than at present are supplied to the Territory that a more thorough supervision can be exercised over this portion of the coast, that the natives can be accorded that protection afforded them elsewhere."

Alfred Searcy took with him Mr. E. O. Robinson, and Mr. H. Pinder.<sup>20</sup> When they reached Bowen Straits they sighted three praus anchored in a small bay north of Cliff Point, and the cap-

tains (or masters) of these came on board the Customs' cutter to settle what revenue each must pay. One of them defied the officials and would not settle his account. In the face of all threats, he and his crew calmly went on with their work of getting under weigh. As Searcy puts it, in these circumstances something definite had to be done; so the customs men jumped on board the prau, and drawing their revolvers forced the master to pay. "I must admit," confessed Searcy, "that I thought the show of authority rather hazardous, as all the crew carried murderous looking cresses (*kris*), and they had numbers of spears on board, many of them poisoned."

Searcy's description of the praus is worthy of mention here.<sup>20a</sup> The hull of a prau was constructed of wood, and the top, sides, deck roof, and yards of bamboo. The sails were of matting, and many of the ropes and hawsers of plaited cane. The deck was of split bamboo, worked together with wire or fibre, and could be rolled up when necessary. These ships were steered by two rudders, one on each side of the stern. Some of them carried iron anchors, others wooden ones weighted with heavy stones: and often when the anchor was dropped a man was sent down to see that it was properly fixed in solid ground. The wooden or bamboo mast had two stays, resembling a lengthy trident. The spaces between masts and stays were fitted with wooden steps; and on these the sailors stood to hoist and roll up the sail, which could be unrolled again by a simple contrivance like a window blind. The usual way of boarding the boat was over the bow, since that was close to the water's edge while the stern was away up in the air. After climbing up a beam, one stepped across an opening to the deck in front of the captain's cabin, on one side of the bows. On the other side was that of the second-in-command. The entrance to the cabins was about two feet by two feet six inches, with room inside for a man to sit or lie down. The high stern had several small rooms, holes, like a large pigeon house, and in these and on top of the cargo lived the crew: the galley was a large iron pan containing sand on which to light the fire.

These praus, said Searcy, had a sort of bowsprit rigged out,

and sometimes carried two or three head sails. On top they carried plenty of spare bamboos and rattans, obtained from the island of Kissä (that is, Kisar in the Leti Islands), near Timor, on their way to the north coast.

The dredging canoes that the Malays used were about twenty-five feet long, two feet deep, and four feet wide, cut from solid logs. The solid part was raised about two feet, the planks being fastened on with treenails and caulked with leaves. On one side was fixed an immense outrigger, upon which the crew would perch when it lay to windward—the more wind, the more men on the outrigger. They carried large mat sails, and when flying along in the breeze made a very pleasing picture.

Early in 1884 Mr G. R. McMinn, the Acting Government Resident, received news from Port Essington that several Macassan praus had passed that port without reporting and entering as they were supposed to do.<sup>21</sup> He immediately arranged for Mr Searcy to organize a party, and to set out in the steamer "Fleetwing" to "enforce the law".

During this expedition, four praus were discovered, "and as they were vessels that had been boarded the previous year and instructed as to the course to be adopted in the future, it was evident beyond doubt that their intention was to defraud the customs. In these circumstances the sub-collector would have felt justified in seizing the vessels, but the size of the steamer and the strength of the party were not sufficient to enable him to do so. He therefore adopted the course of fining the captain of each." Later, between the south of Goulburn and the Sims Islands, they sighted a dredging canoe, and further on two praus in a sheltered bay. The masters, named Rimba and Poi Nando, came on board and paid their duties.

Searcy comments<sup>22</sup> that the Macassans had some "peculiar customs". On arrival at the mainland, before they began trepanning they would lower to the bottom of the sea a new plate, containing portions of their best food. And the night before Searcy's boat reached them, they had performed the "ceremony of making wind", apparently planning to move their ground. During this same trip Searcy searched for and found Bapa Paloe, master of a prau which had been evading the authorities,

anchored at Mallison Island near Cape Newbald, in Arnhem Bay.

A few days after Bapa Paloe had been forced to pay his dues, Searcy discovered two more praus in Melville Bay. "The masters of the praus came on board with their papers. They were Oesing, master of the 'Bonding Patola', and Daeng Matoona, master of the 'Pallidgaway'. The first named had been issued with a licence. Daeng Matoona had come down in company with Rimba and Poi Nando, but had got separated during a squall: Daeng Matoona made the same excuse as the others—rough weather—for not calling at Port Essington." He paid his £10 fine, and was warned of the punishment he would bring upon himself if he did not comply with the regulations.

In 1884, too, Searcy<sup>23</sup> tells us that the Aborigines around Port Essington were "anything but friendly. They have been unable to obtain their usual supply of tobacco from the Malays, and, rightly or wrongly, consider us the cause of their discomfiture." The Malay traders were trying to avoid the Customs depôts and evade their dues, and so the Aborigines had their usual avenues of trading either restricted or closed altogether. The Europeans, apparently, were unable to fill this breach. Thus the Aborigines were left without the trade goods which they desired, and without what they now considered to be their normal employment. Searcy remarks:<sup>24</sup> "there is little doubt that they look upon the whites as enemies, especially since the duties have been levied upon the Malays, as they do not get the quantity of spirits they used to. It is a well-known fact, however, that whites from the sea are better received than those coming from inland."

The period that followed was one of increasing friction between the Malays and the Europeans, especially the Customs Officials, trepangers, pearlers and so on. The Aborigines, of course, were affected by this; and quarrels and fights took place between them and the Indonesians, as well as with the Europeans whom they accused of deliberately tampering with time-honoured practices and trading relationships.

At about this time, the practice was commenced of receiving notification from Macassar concerning the number of praus sailing from that port for the north Australian coast. For instance:<sup>25</sup>

"It is satisfactory to note, by the correspondence received from the Government of the Celebes, dated from Macassar, that the number of praus cleared from Macassar during the year 1884, for Marege (this coast) agrees with the number, namely, thirteen, overhauled by the Customs at Oojoontambanoonoo (Bowen Straits), and to which licences had been duly issued, and duty collected on goods brought by them to our coast." In spite of this optimistic tone, the Customs people do not seem to have been satisfied that they had a proper check on all the visiting praus.

In 1885, Searcy travelled in the ship "Palmerston" to the Roper and Macarthur Rivers,<sup>26</sup> along the northern and eastern coast of Arnhem Land. Inside North Goulburn Island he sighted sixteen dredging canoes, and shortly afterwards four praus commanded by Bapa Paloe. Searcy mentions, by the way, that in duty and licence fee an average of £50 per prau was collected, the total being approximately £500 a year.<sup>27</sup>

It seems to have been officially as well as unofficially admitted that the indirect purpose of these regulations was to discourage the Indonesians, and so leave the way clear for European enterprise. At the end of this year Searcy wrote in his official report,<sup>28</sup> concerning trepang: "This industry, as far as local enterprise is concerned, is yet in its infancy, not being more than three or four camps on the coast, the farthest being Mr Robinson's, at Bowen Straits; but I have every reason to believe that it will grow, and camps extend right down to the Gulf of Carpentaria, the fishing being carried on over ground at present only known to the Malays from Macassar. The Europeans will now have a much better chance of employing the natives to work for them, as the praus have not the attractions they formerly had in the shape of spirits and tobacco, as the duties collected on these articles debar them from bringing such large quantities to give the natives in payment for their labour."

At the beginning of 1887, Searcy reported<sup>29</sup> that the duty on rice had increased  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. a lb. And Mr E. O. Robinson, from the Bowen Strait dépôt, wrote that according to the captains of visiting praus, fourteen ships had left Macassar for the north coast. Eleven had obtained licences; and Robinson collected from

them £507, "a sum that must be considered a satisfactory one under the circumstances, as no duty was collected on spirits this year, and I could not find a single bottle on board one of them."

Two of the praus had been wrecked in rough weather, in December 1886, on the north side of Melville Island, and their crews attacked by natives. The "Lasalasaya", with a crew of twenty-seven, had been able to retrieve only two of their canoes, and reached Bowen Strait the following week "in a starving condition". The "Erang Polea", with a crew of thirty-three, was also in trouble: "but Oesing, the master, is a determined fellow, and with the aid of an old carbine kept them at bay while he fitted up his four large canoes. He took a supply of rice, coco-nuts, etc., but was very unfortunate, as one canoe capsized in the heavy sea, and they all got swept into the Gulf of Van Diemen and did not arrive here till the 4th of January, in a very sorry condition". Mr Robinson supplied these men with a little rice, and they went on along the coast in search of the other praus.

The missing prau had not been found: but since "one of the canoes passed a dead Malay floating in the water", it was assumed that she had been lost at sea.

"The Malays informed me," added Robinson, "that, notwithstanding that the majority of the praus had good takes of trepang last season they made nothing, as the trepang market was down 40 per cent. . . . This season the Malays are taking the skins off the trepang and dyeing it black, in hopes of selling it at a better price, and it very much depends how far they are successful what sort of revenue will be collected here next year, as the extra duty on rice will, under the present prices, stop the majority of the praus from coming."

In the following year there were eleven praus, which yielded £662 although<sup>so</sup> they all had smaller quantities of rice and tobacco on their manifests than usual, and no spirits". And Robinson himself was experiencing some trouble with them. "I most respectfully ask your assistance to mitigate the grievance under which I suffer when any of these praus made their camp close to me. The Malays will buy anything, even though they know it to be stolen, from a native, and a native will steal anything

that he can get a pipe of tobacco for. My trepang is taken away in small quantities; buffalo horns go, knives, tomahawks, tools, in fact anything the working men can lay their hands on. It is impossible to lock everything up, and watching is quite out of the question. Besides, I require the assistance of these natives, and if I detect and punish them, I make them the Malays' friends and my enemies. . . ." "The unfortunate part of it is," he complained, "that my own men, who have the run of the place, are the ones who steal from me."

The visiting fleet continued to be small. Early in 1890, Robinson (now designated "Landing-Waiter" at Bowen Straits) reported to Searcy<sup>31</sup> that he had collected £521 from ten praus, with £26 to collect. One prau was missing, and was said to have started, with two others which arrived safely, steering a south-south-east course from the Island of Roti. "I shall probably have to put a man outside Croker Island, on the point, next year, as I observe all the praus make that a rendezvous and most of them come in that way. Some of them appear to have been a foot deeper loaded, and their manifests are smaller every year. . . . I would respectfully suggest that the s.s. "Adelaide" be instructed to interview one or two of the praus, just to keep them up to the mark. I had more trouble with some of them this year than last."

Meantime, official interest in the presence of pearl-shell on the north coast was growing. In 1893 six boats were licensed, and Searcy wrote<sup>32</sup> hopefully: "What the future of the industry may be when our great coast line—somewhere about 2,000 miles, and still unprospected—is taken into consideration it is impossible to say, but if proved successful the value to the country is simply incalculable. . . ." The following year, the Government Resident reported<sup>33</sup> that, in addition to nine local boats, a "schooner and nine luggers belonging to an English company, made their appearance in our waters and commenced operations. The manager . . . informed me that he intended to thoroughly prospect the coast before leaving." This schooner, the "Flowerdale", had arrived in Darwin from the Kei (Ke) Islands. Searcy adds<sup>34</sup> that most of the fishing had been carried on about Melville Island and the Vernon Islands. "That shell does exist in

many places there can be no question, for at several of the Malay camping places on the coast to the eastward I have obtained splendid specimens of pearl-shell from the Malays. The Malays say themselves that at one time there was plenty of shell on the coast, but now there is very little obtained, which is easily understood, as wherever the beds are accessible to swimming divers that shell has been practically exterminated by the Malays in their constant visits to our coast; but in the deep water, which they cannot fish, there must be rich beds. As the Malays have been in the habit of visiting Australia for over 120 years, as our records prove, and fish the same beds for trepang (which renews itself), whilst the mother-of-pearl requires from five to seven years to recuperate, a knowledge of these facts should be sufficient inducement to enterprising prospectors. . . .”

The decrease in the Macassan fleets continued. In 1895, Searcy commented:<sup>35</sup> “With reference to trepang, the falling off was evidently due to the wreck of two praus. I am afraid that this decline will continue. The low price of the dollar here has so affected the industry that all the local fishers have stopped work; therefore it can well be understood how it would affect those coming from long distances, and from countries with silver currency. It must be understood that the merchants of Macassar interested in the praus have to pay their dues here in gold, and English sovereigns are only obtained in the East at great sacrifice. During December 1895, only three praus reported at the revenue station, Bowen Straits, and from statements made by the masters it seemed no others proposed visiting our coast this season, or at any rate intended reporting themselves.”

In that year there were twenty-two boats engaged in pearl fishing, and the Government prohibited the issue of further licences to Asiatics. Some of the pearl-lugger had been owned by Europeans or Japanese, their crews being chiefly Japanese, Manila men, Malays and Aborigines.

In 1896 the pearl-fishing fleet had increased to thirty vessels; and a sign of the times is contained in a report<sup>36</sup> from the Macarthur River district, on the Gulf of Carpentaria. “If there is any money in trepang, there should be a good opening here. The

Malays, who have been in the habit of coming to this coast for centuries past, have not been here for some years. . . .”

In 1897 a cyclone at and around Darwin destroyed some of the pearl fleet, but replacement kept the figure at thirty. Only six praus, however, arrived from Macassar: and Robinson reported:<sup>37</sup> “Two of the praus could not find sufficient money to pay the whole of their duties, and elected to forfeit a half picul of tobacco each. . . . After careful enquiry amongst the captains of these praus, I am of opinion that there are no other praus on our coast this season.” In that same year the Sub-Collector of Customs, apparently dissatisfied with the existing arrangement, wrote from Darwin to the Netherlands Government at Macassar, asking to be kept informed of the praus’ departure for the Northern Territory, and also of their names.<sup>38</sup>

During these last few years of Indonesian contact with the Arnhem Land coast little documentary material is available, apart from repetition of previous data. For instance, in the Government Resident’s report of 1899<sup>39</sup> we read: “Trepang fishing on our north coast, between De Courcy Head and the Sir Edward Pellew Group, in the Gulf of Carpentaria, is still carried on by Malays from Macassar, and the same six praus visit our coast every year. . . . The revenue derived from these praus varies from £320 to £350 per annum, and is levied from tobacco and rice which the Malays trade with the natives, for trepang. . . . Its marketable value is from £40 to £60 per ton, and each prau takes away about £1,000 worth.

“During the latter part of December Mr E. O. Robinson resigned his position of landing-waiter, and Mr Alfred Brown was appointed to replace him.”

The trepang beds between Cape Don and de Courcy Head were closed in 1903, but it was officially stated that there was nothing to prevent the Malays from fishing elsewhere on the coast.<sup>40</sup>

In the same year there were forty-eight pearl boats on the coast: and a combined protest on Malay fishermen was made by Charles E. Gore, J. Cleland, C. Pfitzner, N. Macdonald and others.<sup>41</sup> Because this move probably helped to influence the



Plate 6: Maizulan at Virkalla.

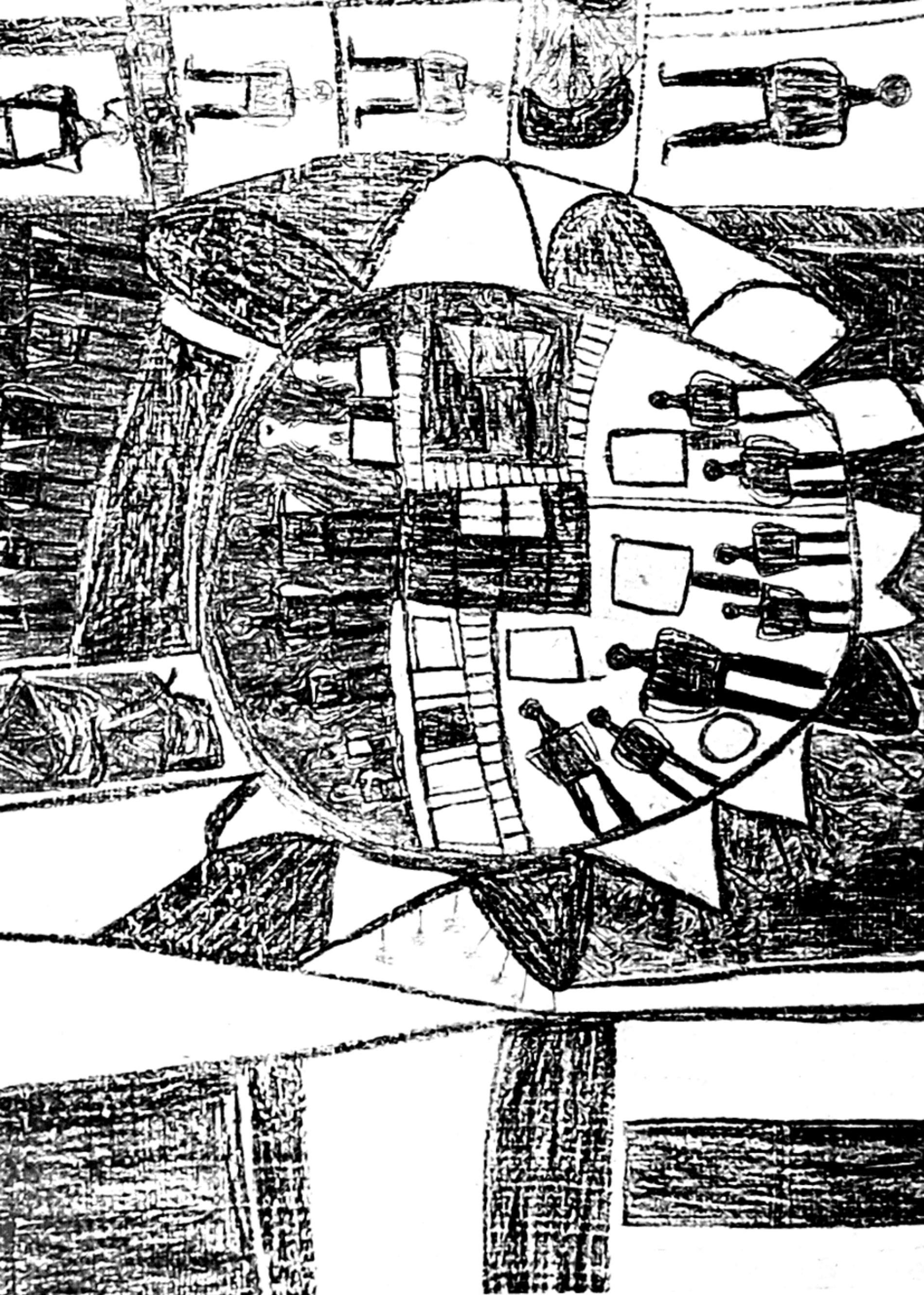


Plate 7: Drawing: The Port of Macassar and its immediate vicinity.

Government in its decision to prohibit Indonesian trading on the Northern Territory coast, it deserves some mention here.

Gore complained that he was "trying to make a living down the coast fishing and preserving trepang", but found that the yearly visits of the Malay praus had "such a debasing effect on the natives that a white man cannot get them to work".

"The law," he said, "prohibits us from giving the natives intoxicating liquors, but the Malays are able to supply them with a great quantity so that the blacks will not work unless they get a certain amount, and so we are only able to make a bare living." Venereal disease, spread all along the coast, had been brought by the Malays. Duty collected from the Malays amounted to only about £300 annually, and this was absorbed in paying the expenses of collecting, whereas the praus removed between four and five thousand pounds in fish, turtle-shell and pearls.

He added that the praus, which were under the Dutch flag, were allowed to build houses and in fact live ashore for six months of the year in Australia; but "if we should wish to go to Aroe or Ke Islands, we are prohibited from fishing within three leagues of the shore; and even if we wanted to collect wood or water and went on shore for this purpose, we would stand a good chance of losing our boat and plant".

"The general opinion of all of us that are trying to make a living down the coast is that if the Malays were stopped from coming, the whites and natives would benefit greatly, and the industry would grow very shortly into a big source of revenue to the Northern Territory. But we cannot compete with the Malays whose grog and rice costs so very little in Macassar. . . ."

The Netherlands Government had in fact, in 1893, imposed severe restrictions on alien boats found within its East Indian waters. Searcy had remarked<sup>42</sup> at the time, drawing attention to the number of Asiatics enjoying fishing rights in Australia: "If it should be found necessary at any time to restrict the issue of licences as to foreigners it would be well to remember the action of the Dutch Government, and provision will have to be made in dealing with the Malay praus who visit our coast every season, the crews of which are all Dutch subjects."

J. Cleland had been one of a party which in May 1900, left Port Darwin on a pearling boat, and had received instructions from the Government to act on its behalf concerning Malayan praus.

At Drummond Head, in Melville Bay, they sighted a prau lying at anchor, which at once hoisted the Dutch flag. Cleland contacted the master, who had no licence, and had not reported to Bowen Straits because his main mast had been lost on the way down from Macassar. Seven bags of rice were therefore appropriated, and the master paid forty-three sovereigns. The prau carried forty Macassans, and on shore was a camp of about one hundred Aborigines who were assisting the traders in gathering pearl-shell and other products. This particular prau had on board two tons of mother-of-pearl shell, and there were said to be six praus on the coast nearby.

Cleland agreed with Gore that Europeans engaged in trepanging found it hard to obtain natives to work for them, since these were intimate with the Malays and spoke their language fluently, and consequently preferred to trade with them rather than with Europeans. Liquor, he said, was given to them in sections of hollow bamboo.

"The praus evade the Customs, and leave canoes with the Aborigines until their return the following year . . . and report to the Customs in Bowen Straits without producing these. In the meantime the Aborigines have gathered much shell for them during their absence."

In 1904 the following telegram appeared in Southern newspapers: "The Malays who man the praus which sail down from Macassar to Port Bowen, in the Northern Territory, are suspected by officers of the Customs Department of smuggling, and it was recently suggested that some of their number also obtained admission to Australia despite the Immigration Restriction Act. After considering these representations, the Minister for Customs determined to close Port Bowen as a reporting station from January 1, and make oversea Asiatics who wish to engage in the trepang industry go to Port Darwin. It is believed that the trade-winds will not enable the praus to go to Port

Darwin, and therefore they will in all probability be prevented from visiting Northern Australia.<sup>43a</sup>

In 1908 the Malays had finally left the coast. Dr Cecil L. Strangman, who made a fairly intensive survey along the north coast that year, saw no praus whatever.<sup>43</sup>

It is surprising to realise just how little was known by local and other Europeans concerning this Indonesian contact along the Arnhem Land coast. Certainly much of the Northern Territory, and especially that part of the coast, remained for a long time virtually unexplored; and information concerning the Aborigines was not only scanty, but based almost entirely on observation and hearsay, without any attempt at really thorough investigation. For the most part, therefore, the Europeans' knowledge of the visiting praus depended upon what they were able to see for themselves, with the minimum of reliance on native sources. It was the economic factor which compelled them to pay some attention to this subject, and even then they confined themselves to those aspects of it that seemed relevant to themselves. Searcy alone, among all the writers mentioned in this Chapter, showed some interest in the "romantic" aspect of the Macassans' visits, in their ships and crew, and in their customs and beliefs.

From about 1872 until the end of their trading days, a state of mutual antagonism existed between the Indonesians and the local Europeans. Slowly, realisation was dawning that vast wealth was being removed from the north coast, while local fishermen were powerless either to exploit this themselves, or to control its being exploited by aliens. Faced with strong economic opposition, they protested from time to time to their Government that Malay trading should be drastically controlled, or unconditionally forbidden. Only by this means could they make their ventures profitable. Here was an old problem—the question of preference to Europeans, with their higher living standards and protected interests, and their dislike of competing with Indonesians who had not only far better understanding of the industries involved, but also a lower standard of living.

The Macassans looked on the north coast as their own, a place that they themselves had discovered and pioneered, and

where eventually they had established trading bases. They resented the intrusion of Europeans, who came so much later, and set up in opposition to them. They thought it unjust that they should be forced to pay customs and licence fees, where for so many years they had worked unchallenged. So they "ran the gauntlet", avoiding payment of such dues whenever they could. This led to more or less open conflict between the two groups, each sparring for economic supremacy. Pursuits, fines and seizures by Customs officers were frequent; and the Macassans tried continually to evade them, as well as to exploit the Aborigines and alienate them altogether from the Europeans.

But even when at last the Europeans succeeded in stopping Indonesian trade with the north coast, they did not avail themselves of the rich field of marine industry; and many years were to pass before they were able to gain the confidence of the Arnhem Landers.

## CHAPTER 11

### EUROPEANS ON THE NORTH COAST

Since early European exploration has little bearing on our overall discussion of alien contact in this region, we shall not elaborate on it here.<sup>1</sup> The casual and isolated visits of these explorers and voyagers did not have much effect on Aboriginal life. It was not until the Macassan traders came into open conflict with the European authorities, somewhere around the 1870's, that the Aborigines paid serious attention to this particular form of contact; and we have seen something of this in the previous Chapter.

The early military settlements at Fort Dundas, Raffles Bay and Port Essington provided the Aborigines with more than a passing contact. They exerted a fairly profound influence throughout western Arnhem Land, and this became extended and intensified with the foundation of Port Darwin.<sup>2</sup> It was from this side of Arnhem Land that European infiltration and economic pressure were to make themselves felt: and in the succeeding years an increasing number of travellers and would-be settlers made their appearance in the area. Small, scattered points of white settlement gradually crept eastwards from the port and the main north-south road, as far as Port Essington—although few of them cared, at that time, to venture into the “wild” country beyond the East Alligator River. The attractions were chiefly the buffaloes, the timber, the trepang, and the possibility that here, near permanent waters, might be found good grazing grounds for stock. For a number of years, however, their progress was slow.

In 1874 a man named Lewis Cottingham writes of his trip to

Port Essington in the "Young Victoria".<sup>3</sup> At first the Aborigines there were friendly, for Robinson, a member of the party, had promised them that a Mr Sinclair would be coming soon with gifts of blankets and tobacco. But when Cottingham thoughtlessly mentioned later that he knew nothing of this plan, the Aborigines became hostile and unco-operative.

During the same year there was talk of sending an expedition to Blue Mud Bay, in the Gulf of Carpentaria.<sup>4</sup> Saunders and Mathers were the instigators, and planned to appoint A. J. Giles as leader. Their intention was to explore the country between Pine Creek or Union Reef (Union Town), and the Gulf of Carpentaria. According to popular belief, a rich gold field lay somewhere in the neighbourhood of the high table-lands that skirted the western shores of the Gulf, and these writers related that the Dutch had obtained gold here before the British took possession of the territory. Another story tells of a party of Portuguese sailors, who were supposed to have taken away large quantities of gold from some place in the south of Arnhem Land, and one or two sailors who ventured inland for short distances were said to have picked up rich specimens. Their dream of wealth has remained to the present day, unsubstantiated and unfulfilled. This particular prospecting party asked the Government if its patrol boat, the "Flying Cloud", could come round to the Gulf and pick them up.

In 1876 the Government Resident at Darwin wrote<sup>5</sup> that the official boat, the "Woolner", had returned from Blue Mud Bay bringing back the Robinson Prospecting Party (that is, the prospecting party sponsored by Saunders and Mathers). They had been quite unsuccessful in their search for gold, but said that they had seen some splendid country, fit for plantations. The journal that they kept of their trip<sup>6</sup> is particularly valuable for its description of their contact with the Aborigines. Apparently the original intention of going overland had been abandoned, and instead the party went around the coast by boat. They left Palmerston (Darwin) on the 9 September 1875, calling in at Port Essington, and Hall Point (near the Woolner River). At Cape Stewart, frightened that they would be speared, they were forced to threaten the Aborigines. "We heard that these were

the worst niggers on the whole coast, surprising Malay praus, killing and eating the crews and breaking up the vessel for the iron. . . ."

They sailed past the Crocodile Islands, Elcho and Cunningham Islands, and on October 5 arrived at Inglis Island. Next day they heard from Aborigines that four white men, with a lot of horses, were camped about "three sleeps" from Arnhem Bay. They continued on to Cape Wilberforce and Melville Bay, and around Cape Arnhem, and anchored in an unidentified bay. Then they started overland to Arnhem Bay in search of these four white men. On the way they met a number of Aborigines, including one with a broken leg who could speak a little English. He had been to Macassar and Singapore with the Malays, and expressed great admiration for those places. He had seen the other group of white men, he told them. There had been a fight between the blacks, and two of the Europeans had been killed: as a reprisal, forty Aborigines had been shot.

The white men involved were apparently Walker and his party, who had come overland from somewhere near the head of the Roper River, but no record is available of their journey.

The Robinson party continued on by boat to Blue Mud Bay. Before setting sail they noticed a group of local Aborigines, who were too frightened to come near. The natives employed on the "Woolner" wanted to "hunt" them, feeling that they had an old score to settle. Four Port Essington natives, it was said, had once been brought here by a Malay prau, and sold by its master to the local people in exchange for a quantity of tortoise-shell. According to the story, they had been killed and eaten. (This was probably not so. The eastern Arnhem Landers, although they practised burial cannibalism, did not kill for eating.)

Past Cape Shields and Blue Mud Bay the party went on foot along the banks of a river, and discovered an old camp site that must have belonged to the Walker party. There were horse tracks and European footprints, and they found a small empty chlorodyne bottle. Further up the river they found more tracks, but the sound of rifle shots brought them hurrying back. Arnold, who had been left on the boat with some native women, had been surrounded by a crowd of about sixty Aborigines who

threatened him with spears. He had managed to scatter them by firing several shots.

The "Woolner" sailed north again and entered a large river, and here in a lagoon disturbed some native women gathering nuts (lily roots). The native crew chased them "on a lubra hunt", but returned unsuccessful. Three days later however four of the native crew deserted, intending to return to Port Essington by land; the journal is pessimistic about their prospects of a safe journey.

Then the party went on to Bickerton Island, where they were met by friendly natives. The writer of the journal remarks: "I find all the coast blacks in a slight degree civilised, having been from time immemorial connected with the Malay fishermen . . . in all the sheltered nooks along the coast beacons were stuck, and on asking the blacks what they are for, they tell you with pride that the Macassan 'sit down' there."

From there they sailed along Groote Eylandt, and returned along the coast to Darwin.

The Walker party included G. Walker, D. Marshall, C. Bridson, F. Gregory, and O. Evensen.<sup>7</sup> As mentioned, little is known of their trip. P. T. Wilkinson wrote<sup>8</sup> from Pine Creek that at Union Town he had met C. Bridson, who had been speared about 150 miles away at the head of the Katherine Waters, about 17 days after they had left. While the party was at Blue Mud Bay, Walker had been speared in the left thigh, and Marshall in the groin.

A year later, a petition or memorial was sent to the Minister of Agriculture and Education (then responsible for the administration of the Northern Territory) asking that Bridson should be granted a bonus.<sup>9</sup> This stated that he had lost the use of one eye in the "disastrous and unhappy expedition" to Blue Mud Bay. He had been speared by the natives while protecting his comrade Walker, afterwards killed on the same expedition, and the wounds he received had deprived him of the use of his arm.

At about this time, it was suggested that Mr Levi, of the Cobourg Cattle Company, should be appointed Sub-Protector of Aborigines at Port Essington. About two hundred and fifty of them were camped there, including a number of old and infirm

people. The position, however, seems to have been almost entirely a nominal one.<sup>10</sup>

Captain Cadell had already made several exploring trips by ship in 1867–69<sup>11</sup> along the north coast of Arnhem Land, especially in the north-eastern corner. In 1878<sup>12</sup> he applied to the Northern Territory Government for a lease to cover the whole of the Arnhem Land coast, and all its adjacent islands and reefs, for the term of ten years, at such nominal or low rental as might be agreed upon. This lease would involve the sole right to fish and collect trepang and tortoise-shell from and including Croker Island to the Queensland border, "the lessee fully understanding that he was to protect his own interests against the Malays".

However, accusations had been made that Captain Cadell had kidnapped some Goulburn Island Aborigines. In the same year, he wrote to Tomkinson at Adelaide<sup>13</sup> about "the vindictive charge". He was anxious to push forward his own proposition: "but really considering my position with your Government, I think they might well grant it (that is, the lease) to me at a 'quit rent' as let bloated Chinamen at Macassar have it for nothing. . . . It may turn out something, it will certainly bring me into collision with the Malays, but it would give me command of the Coast to a certain extent which seems desirable. . . . I am not blind however to the trouble it would entail."

The Minister of Education did not favour the plan, and wrote from Adelaide:<sup>14</sup> "I do not recommend the acquiescence of the Government in Captain Cadell's proposal. It would I think lead to serious embarrassment, if without much fuller enquiry we were to empower the Captain to prevent a trade which he himself says has obtained for centuries. If the matter is considered of sufficient importance a special commissioner should be sent to report on the whole subject." The Government agreed with the Minister's opinion.

In 1881 Robinson, in charge of the Cobourg Cattle Company's station at Port Essington, reported<sup>15</sup> that some natives had been "kidnapped" from Goulburn Island. A pearlship from Cape York, with a South Sea Islander named Harry Robinson in the crew, was said to have induced natives to go on board. Only

one white man was seen, who told the Aborigines that they were to "swim for pearl-shell". However, there was not enough evidence to enable anything conclusive to be done about this.

In 1883 David Lindsay explored certain parts of Arnhem Land and adjacent country,<sup>16</sup> and so made the most notable contribution to our knowledge of the Arnhem Land interior. His plan was to traverse the country between the Alligator River and Cape Arnhem.<sup>17</sup> Eventually he went from Katherine to the Liverpool, in western Arnhem Land, on to the Tompkinson Range, and south of the mouth of Glyde's Inlet. Then he zig-zagged across to the back of Blue Mud Bay and inland from Bennett Bay, and touched the coast. He continued on to Evelyn Ponds, and circled south to the Roper River.<sup>18</sup>

His contact with Aborigines receives incidental mention, some of it friendly and some indifferent; and it is inferred that the party found it necessary to shoot to defend themselves. He writes, in his preliminary report of explorations north of the Roper,<sup>19</sup> that near the source of the Wilton River natives gathered in force one night to attack them, but "were prevented". They managed however to spear four horses, three fatally. On the plains above Castlereagh Bay ("magnificent pastoral and agricultural country") they encountered fresh hostility from the Aborigines. Five days later, the natives surrounded the party on a table-land, and attempted to halt their progress. The Europeans were "compelled to fire at them to stop further trouble".

In 1883, too, the Government vessel "Flying Cloud"<sup>20</sup> left Port Darwin with sixteen Chinese and their stores, bound for Mount Norris Bay, near Croker Island, in search of cypress pine. Several landings were made, and there is a report of another party, under Solomon, who travelled overland to this area. At this period, Robinson at Port Essington was complaining about the unfriendliness of the Aborigines,<sup>21</sup> said to be caused by the decline in the visits of the Malay traders. "Twice lately," he warned, "I have had trouble with these blacks, and there is likely to be more trouble if conciliatory measures are not introduced. I have a good deal of influence amongst the natives, and there are always a few friends who will give me timely information as to any hostile intentions, so that, personally, I am not

apprehensive of danger, but strangers coming down the coast should be careful. I have recovered all the firearms that were stolen from the Chinamen at the late outrages in Bowen Straits. The murders were committed principally for tobacco. . . ."<sup>22</sup>

In about 1885 J. A. Macartney took up pastoral leases around Melville Bay and Arnhem Bay in north-eastern Arnhem Land. Robinson left in his boat the "Bertie" with seven tons of cargo for Macartney, who was supposed to be on the Goyder River looking for a site for his new cattle station. On board were a Manilla man, a native, and two Chinese passengers who were going out to work for Macartney. Captain Carrington, whom he met in the Bowen Straits, told Robinson that he had searched every creek and inlet near the Goyder and had found no trace of Macartney, but that the Aborigines were hostile.<sup>23</sup> Robinson also searched the coast around the Goyder, and then went up the river by dinghy. At the "third falls" he landed and found tracks of the "Palmerston" party (that is, Carrington's)—a tin that had contained sheep tongues, an empty salmon tin, and the paper wrappers from a bottle of pickles; but no traces of Macartney. "Ten years ago," Robinson comments in passing, "I walked from the Gulf near Sir Rodericks Pocket to Arnhem Bay."

He tried to get in touch with Aborigines to enquire into Macartney's disappearance, but was unable to contact any. After his return to Darwin, the Government Resident asked the Minister for Education for permission to send a launch to Arnhem Bay with stores, to search for Macartney. He added that Robinson would go with Aborigines who knew the coast and country,<sup>24</sup> and he considered the matter to be urgent.

After all this, however, Macartney turned up safe and sound. The cause of the trouble had been the inadequate mapping and surveying of the area: and the search parties had concentrated almost entirely on the Goyder River. Meantime, Macartney had been obliged to send pack-horses down to the Roper for stores. He had found an overland route by way of the Wilton River, and after an exciting time during which his camp "was attacked in numbers",<sup>25</sup> had managed to set up Florida Station, stocking

it with 6,000 head of cattle. "In this north-east part of Arnheim's Land," says the report, "the natives are also numerous and dangerous."

Captain Carrington, in the Government boat "Palmerston", had been doing a certain amount of exploration along the coast, especially about Castlereagh Bay, and the Goyder, Blyth, Tompkinson, Liverpool, King and Alligator Rivers. On the Goyder, to his disgust, he was speared twice by a native, just after one of them "had been on board the ship, and treated to food, tobacco, etc."<sup>26</sup> But on the Tompkinson, the "many natives" he met "were very friendly, and brought their children with them, a practice not at all common. They were presented with pipes, tobacco, and biscuits".

In 1885 it was decided that the "Palmerston" should visit Buckingham, Arnhem and Blue Mud Bays, to report on the rivers flowing into them:<sup>27</sup> and Captain Carrington accordingly set off once more. Blue Mud Bay, he presently reported,<sup>28</sup> was frequented by the Malays, and the natives spoke "the Macassan tongue". "They are quite unacquainted with the whites and were very much afraid of the steamer; it requires a good deal of persuasion to induce them to visit us. . . ." However, several parties of Europeans had already been through the region, so that the real reason for the natives' trying to avoid his party was possibly their fear of reprisals.

Alfred Searcy<sup>29</sup> makes some reference to the extent of European contact along the northern coast of Arnheim Land. He mentions several cruises between the years 1883 and 1886, mostly on Government boats: but this contact with the Aborigines was spasmodic, and had no serious effect on their way of life. At this period the natives were still influenced mainly by the Macassan traders. Toward Europeans they usually showed either indifference or hostility arising from mutual misunderstanding and distrust.

Florida station, the first and also the last of its kind in that region, cannot be by-passed without some brief description.

It covered nearly 4,000<sup>30</sup> and later five thousand square miles of country. The homestead was ten miles north of Mount Delight, in the Arafura country, near Glyde's Inlet and about

twenty miles from the coast. A Queensland visitor to the station in 1887, Mr Heber Percy, writes<sup>31</sup> enthusiastically about his trip there with Macartney, and was most optimistic about its future. The buildings apparently were not the temporary shacks to be found on many such places in the Northern Territory; but at the head station especially the buildings were "good and comfortable, the yards large, well planned, and gated throughout, and there are two good paddocks. . . ." There was an excellent garden near the lagoon, containing "all sorts of fruit and vegetables, mulberries, melons, pineapples, pawpaws, mangoes, bananas, passion fruit, figs, lemons, oranges, etc.; they have over 700 pineapple plants. . . ." The plains about the homestead were covered with wild rice, and the lagoon was swarming with fish. The European manager, then a man named Randell, took them up to some caves, where "the blacks had made some very curious drawings in ochre, one represented an alligator, another a centipede. . . ." Several Chinese were also employed on the station, as well as a number of natives.

Searcy<sup>32</sup> too provides a description of Florida, given by a Mr D'Arcy Uhr in 1888. In 1890 Mr John Watson, then manager of the station, gave a brief report<sup>33</sup> to the Administration, containing nothing new: he stated that the place was running 1,700 branded cattle, and could carry 25,000 head. "The improvements," he added, "are far in advance of the present requirements of the station."

But all these hopes came to nothing. Macartney had formed another station, Auvergne, near the mouth of the Victoria River away on the western borders of the Territory: and here, a few years later, he removed all the stock from Florida, considering it to be "better adapted for cattle".<sup>34</sup> He surrendered his lease, which was taken up by the Eastern and African Cold Storage Supply Company. A new station was set up there, and the Company purchased all the stock on Elsey, Hodgson Downs and Woologorang stations—about 2,500 head of cattle and 100 horses.<sup>35</sup> However, this venture, too, proved unsuccessful. The Company had considerable trouble with the local natives, and in 1905 wrote to the Government Resident asking that the police should patrol their Arafura leases. A man named Spencer, killed

by the natives, was connected with this property, and after his death there was talk of sending a police party (a punitive expedition) into the area.

This, however, was the furthest centre of white settlement on the northern Arnhem Land coast. To the west, the Europeans were gaining a foothold in the buffalo country and along the Alligator Rivers. In 1893, for instance, a complaint was laid against a man named Moore for having threatened to shoot an Aborigine on the Alligator River.<sup>36</sup> And in the same year the Government Resident (C. J. Dashwood) made a trip to these rivers in the steam launch "Victoria". He spent a short time at Alowangeewan, on the East Alligator, "a temporary camp formed by Messrs Cahill and Johnston, who have for some months been buffalo shooting in this locality". Later, assisted part of the way by Cahill's boat, the "Polly", he and his party went a little way inland, and visited among other places "Owen-pelly (Umberlamyon)" billabong (where the Oenpelli mission now stands). Dashwood comments on the rock paintings he saw, of "alligators, kangaroo, fish, wallabies, birds, and human figures . . . drawn with coloured chalks". And he observes: "This is approximately the position where, in June 1866, Mr John McKinlay and party camped for three weeks. . . . The natives attacked his party, but were driven off. The tribes are still hostile, keeping to the ranges, and showing no disposition to exchange compliments with the whites." Not far from the East Alligator River, a place named Unmooragee was, he says, "a favourite camping place for the natives. I was surprised and alarmed to find several undoubtedly suffering from leprosy. In one case the fingers of both hands were gone, merely the stumps remaining; in another the toes had all decayed away, and others disfigured about the face. They evidently understood the loathsomeness of the disease, and were afraid, for very soon after they disappeared. I am informed by Cahill that he has seen, during the few months he has been in the district, over 50 natives affected the same way".<sup>37</sup>

Three years later, the ship "Red Gauntlet" cruised along the north coast of Arnhem Land, and its journal gives details of

spearings in the neighbourhood of Milngimbi. This boat was afterwards reported missing.<sup>38</sup>

Matters were not improving in Arnhem Land, insofar as white men and natives were concerned.

Mr Justice Dashwood, Government Resident of the Northern Territory, writes in 1900:<sup>39</sup> 'that there are increased strained relations between the Europeans and Aborigines on the north coast. The state of affairs which prevails now has existed all along since the settlement of Europeans and other races in the Northern Territory'.

Later another Government Resident, C. E. Herbert, reported that "since 1903 there have been 12 murders on the coast of this district: first, ten Malays, second, Lewis, third, Spencer, and also several murderous attacks on others. The fact that none of the evildoers were brought to justice will I think further encourage similar acts. The best course would undoubtedly be to patrol the coast by sea, but that would be expensive; in the circumstances I strongly recommend expenditure for additional horses for the Roper River police. . . ." Presumably, it was planned that a police party should penetrate Arnhem Land from the Roper River police station. A few days later it was recommended that a patrol be established from the Roper River to the Arafura country. The Eastern and African Cold Storage Company, with its leases and cattle at Arafura "would be glad to make arrangements so that the police could patrol that part of the district".<sup>40</sup>

Official records do not elaborate on these police expeditions; but north-eastern Arnhem Landers tell of two police patrols that came into their district on punitive expeditions. Although they are uncertain as to the date of these, genealogical evidence seems to show that they took place about the beginning of this century.

One police party, of white and native troopers, came up from the Roper towards Blue Mud Bay. It was responsible for decimating one clan, and shot many people. The other party came overland to Caledon Bay from the direction of Milngimbi, chasing or "hunting" the Aborigines and shooting several. The num-

ber of Aborigines killed by Europeans about this time is revealed by the genealogies of the north-eastern groups.

In 1908 Dr Cecil L. Strangman, then Protector of Aborigines for the Northern Territory, journeyed along the north coast in the s.s. "Federal". His detailed report mentions in passing some aspect of the contact of Europeans and Aborigines.<sup>41</sup>

Croker Island, once inhabited by "a powerful tribe" that in 1902 had numbered about 150 natives, contained only about 40, mostly from surrounding tribes. The original Croker group numbered in 1908, about 14. Dr Strangman attributed this depopulation to disease, "square-gin", and contamination by white men, Malays and Japanese. Food was plentiful, but the majority of natives "did not look as if they had the strength to hunt". Some were clothed and others naked, but "all the young lubras wore the gaudy dresses of the aboriginal prostitute". At Malay Bay was a trepanger, Tim Finnegan, whose Aboriginal mistress, says Strangman, had died from granuloma a few months before his visit. On South Goulburn Island, where he anchored, he was told that Aborigines who worked for Europeans gathering trepang were given a daily ration of rum or square gin. Further on, at the King River, most of the original groups had become diseased and contaminated through contact with aliens; and the remainder had left the country to amalgamate with the Junction Bay and South Goulburn Island people.

He saw no natives at the mouth of the Liverpool River; but since he was told that they had been "severely punished in recent years for offences against 'civilisation,'" he was not surprised that they avoided his party. At the mouth of the Goyder River in Castlereagh Bay the Aborigines at first refused to allow them to land, until assured that they possessed no firearms. Strangman writes, "their pitiful cry of 'no more bang' plainly told a tale of what back country folks call a previous 'lesson'." "These Goyder River natives," he adds, "have gained an unenviable distinction for treachery and hostility to Europeans but on being questioned by Harry (the party's Aboriginal informant and interpreter) said they were not ill disposed towards the white men, but they point blank refuse to lend or sell their

lubras (native women), giving as a reason the certainty of starting venereal diseases amongst the local tribes. Many of these coastal tribes — most likely from bitter experience in the past — believe that every lubra that has intercourse with a white man gets inoculated with venereal disease as a matter of course, and here as in every other locality in the Territory where outrages have been committed by natives against Europeans it seems that the eternal lubra question was at the bottom of it. . . .”

Whilst visiting the Elcho and Mallison Islands, Arnhem and Melville Bays district, Strangman proceeded to open up a number of Aboriginal coffins. But, he says, “I had a rude shock when dismantling a native coffin on Elcho Island to find that the bones were tied up with strips of “turkey red” and the skull stuffed with a few pages of the *Adelaide Chronicle*” — this in an area which he believed to be unfrequented by Europeans!

At Caledon Bay, a Goulburn Island native who was with the party left them, and ran away. “This was not unexpected, as we were aware that he had been in some way mixed up in the murder of Spencer at Arnhem Bay a few years ago.”

At Groote Eylandt, he tells us, “I had been warned by Europeans that had previously visited this island that these natives were the worst and most hostile lot on the coast. . . .” The local Aborigines, however, related that some white men who had visited the island some months before had treated them kindly, and to their great surprise had sailed away without “attempting to steal the pick of their women”. Strangman learned that Dr White, Bishop of Carpentaria, and his party had visited this island.<sup>42</sup>

Summarizing some of his opinions on the question of culture contact, Strangman “firmly believes and all prominent Northern Territory authorities on the native question agree with him that in almost every instance where Europeans were assaulted by uncivilised natives some of the white men had either previously ill-treated them or had interfered with their women”. He considered, too, that gonorrhoea had been introduced and spread by Europeans.

Dr Strangman’s contribution to the question of alien contact consisted of facing up to the problem, admitting that Euro-

pean contact had led to tribal disintegration, and that Europeans themselves had been, although sometimes unwittingly, responsible for much of the Aborigines' hostility. This was a great improvement on the popular attitude that the Aborigines were inherently "savage" and naturally hostile to visitors. Strangman pointed out that the Aborigines had as much justification as anyone would have in such a position to express themselves pugnaciously, when any other approach would have been misunderstood or ignored. But many years were to pass before this fact was fully realised by administrators of native affairs in the Northern Territory and elsewhere.

Although a new century had dawned, the antagonism between the alien and the Aborigine did not diminish. The history and background of this contact had shown disruption and discord since the early days of European settlement, and when the Indonesian trading was halted the whole position became accentuated. The punitive expeditions which took place in certain parts of Arnhem Land served to fan the flame of an already apparent hostility: and neither group showed much tolerance of the other. In the years that followed, these feelings were expressed in spasmodic fighting, in spearings and massacres, and culminated in the murders at Woodah Island and Caledon Bay.

In the meantime, however, conditions continued in much the same way. Western Arnhem Land was being "tamed" through increasing European settlement and fishing activities along the coastline, and the scattered "buffalo" camps that extended as far east as the Oenpelli hills. As this happened, dissension between the Aborigines and settlers became more irregular and less blatant. The Aborigines learned to repress their dislike of the white man, keeping it as a latent force that awaited suitable opportunity for expression.

But in eastern Arnhem Land the position had altered scarcely at all. More boats passed along the coast, and more European and Japanese pearlers and trepangers sought these waters; but the *status quo* remained unchanged.

The Aborigines tell that about this time a big launch came drifting into Port Bradshaw. There was no one on board; but the goods that it carried were a welcome surprise to the neglected

Aboriginal traders — knives, fishing lines, axes, tobacco, and other articles which were to them of considerable value.

It was at this time, too, in the first quarter of the present century, that a Mr Douglas came to Port Bradshaw prospecting for tortoise-shell, on his way to Borroloola. His boat was lost here, and he himself was drowned. The local Aborigines saw the boat washing away but, much to their regret, could not recover anything of its contents.

In 1915 the cutter "Avis", hired for trepanning by a Captain Luff from Lynotts in Borroloola, sailed around the north-eastern coast of Arnhem Land. In the vicinity of Caledon Bay, as a result of trouble with the Aborigines, the trepangers were killed. The Borroloola half-caste and native crew escaped with the cutter, but their women were taken by the local people. Some eventually found their way back along the coast to their home territory, but one remained, "Clara", who belonged originally to the Mara tribe around the Roper and Borroloola. In 1917 she was taken as a witness in this case, but on the way to Darwin leaped overboard in the night and swam ashore.<sup>43</sup> "Clara" is still living with the north-eastern groups. For some time, gossip had it that she was a half-caste,<sup>44</sup> and this led later on to rumours of two lost white women in Arnhem Land.

In 1922 the "Douglas Mawson" was wrecked or lost somewhere in eastern Arnhem Land, and two European women were said to have found their way to the shore and been adopted by the Aborigines. There was, however, no foundation for this. The story was revived from time to time. In 1925 a police party came into the area to investigate the rumours, and was met by Captain (now Sir Hubert) Wilkins at Elcho Island.<sup>45</sup> It comprised 17 white men, chiefly volunteers, and some native trackers, camping with a number of local Aborigines. He also came upon two white policemen who, with their trackers and interpreter, had established a dépôt at Caledon Bay.<sup>45a</sup> The natives remember them as Mick Mari (MacNamara) and Brisali (Bridgeland), and say that they planted a garden there.

In 1934 Mr Warren, then at the Groote Eylandt Half-Caste Settlement, made some enquiries. He had details of an earlier

story localized in this region, and for some time "Clara" was believed to be a European and then a half-caste — when captured, she had several half-caste children. But Mr Warren says: "We missionaries still believe our women (that is, some of the half-caste girls of the Groote Eylandt Mission, and the European missionary women in charge) got mixed up in the story on their arrival at Groote in 1922, and this was an event which was no doubt talked of up the coast." Later Mr Warren took his wife up the coast in a launch, and this may have added to the story. But at the time of writing, Warren was convinced that there were not, and never had been, any white women in the area except those connected with the mission.<sup>46</sup>

Such a romantic tale dies hard. A couple of years ago fresh rumours insisted that two European women were living among the Aborigines north of Mainoru, in southern Arnhem Land; and two seamen wrote to the Northern Territory Native Affairs Branch for permission to join an expedition in search of them!

European and Japanese trepangers and pearlers were becoming more numerous along the coast,<sup>47</sup> and included such well-known figures as Fred Gray, Horace Foster, and Bill Harney. Foster died a romantic death at the Wearyan River.<sup>48</sup> Gray remained to set up an establishment on Groote Eylandt, and maintained the dubious reputation of being for some time the only European to reside permanently on an "inviolable" Aboriginal Reserve. And Harney has survived to become an author,<sup>49</sup> a member of the Native Affairs Branch of the Northern Territory Administration, and a guide to scientific and other expeditions to that region.

Missionaries too served to intensify the inroads of European contact, and were expanding their fields of interest on the Arnhem Land coast.

In 1925 Captain Wilkins visited Groote Eylandt, and on one occasion experienced some trouble there. On 25 March of that year he "had a fight with two Bickerton Island blacks who stole his goods and sneaked on to his camp at night. He brought back to the Half-Caste Mission 110 turtle eggs, but some of the half-caste inmates of the institution stole 16 of them from the verandah of his room".<sup>50</sup>

Bill Harney and his mate Horace Foster had been trepanning along the coast and adjacent islands, and having an exciting time. In May 1927, when they were at Groote Eylandt, the local people reported that the Caledon Bay natives had threatened to kill them both. During the same month, Harney reported to the Mission station that he and Foster had "raided" the Yettabar natives' camp, taking them by surprise early one morning, punishing one Aborigine, and ordering them to return some stolen goods. In June, Groote Eylandt natives told the missionaries that the Caledon Bay Aborigines were on their way to Barkilumba with the definite intention of murdering Harney and Foster against whom they had "a grudge". And on 19 September of that year, missionaries were told that "someone on the 'Iolanthe'" (Harney and Foster's boat) had shot an east-coast native in the leg.<sup>51</sup>

On Elcho Island, the Elcho Naptha Petroleum Company established a boring plant and began drilling for oil, but this venture was soon abandoned.<sup>52</sup> In December 1927, two men named J. C. de Lancourt and Franci, who had both belonged to this oil syndicate, passed through Groote Eylandt, and told a sad story of their travels. From Oenpelli, in the west, they had travelled overland to the coast near Goulburn Island, where their horses had died. After that they had somehow managed to continue on to Milingimbi, and thence to Elcho Island where they had obtained a launch and converted it into a sailing boat. Then they came east and south around the coast, camping at various bays until they reached Groote: on the way their supplies had run out, and they had lived for ten days on the hospitality of the Aborigines. Finally, they departed for the Roper Mission, leaving the launch with the Groote Eylandt Mission for handing over to the liquidators of the oil company.<sup>53</sup>

Later, in 1929, a police party patrolled part of the north-eastern side of Arnhem Land, and among its members were Sergeant Bridgeland, and Constables Abbot, Heathcote and Langdon.

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These, then, are some of the Europeans who came to the Arnhem Land coast, or travelled in its interior. We have been able,

here, to mention only a few. Some came in search of gold and oil, in the hope of quickly amassing fortunes. Others came to work and exploit the natural resources of the country, to establish cattle stations, grow gardens, and collect marine products; and still others came to explore and "open" new country for settlement, to survey and map the territory. There were Government officials, and police, men who chased the Malays and collected their dues: those who came to observe the Aborigines, and those who punished them. There were the casual passers-by, the wandering beachcombers or "combos", and the castaways from storm-wrecked ships. In the passing years they came in their dozens, where the Indonesians had come in their thousands; and with them came other peoples, like the Japanese and the Manilla-men, Torres Strait Islanders, and men from the South Seas.

To add to this diverse assortment of human beings, came the European missionaries.

In 1907 Dr White pioneered a site for the Roper River Mission, in the south of Arnhem Land. Initially, Joynt and Sharp undertook to work in that region; and a little later they extended operations to Groote Eylandt, where there was first a Half-Caste settlement and afterwards included Aborigines as well. These men belonged to the Church Missionary Society; and they also took over, later on, the Government Aboriginal station at Oen-pelli, in western Arnhem Land.

In 1916 the Rev. J. Watson of the Methodist Mission, landed at South Goulburn Island, and established a station. This work was extended to Elcho Island in 1921 by the Rev. J. C. Jennison, but was curtailed when the Naptha Petroleum Company began operations. The mission, however, removed to Milingimbi, at first under the control of Rev. Watson, then of Rev. T. Webb.

But we shall not discuss Mission enterprise at this juncture. In this Chapter we are concerned generally with the influx of different groups of people.

Most of these people did not come to stay. The only exceptions to this were the missionaries and, as we have seen, one trepanger, Fred Gray. For the majority, whether it was work, adventure, exploration, official duty, or simply accident that

brought them to this Arnhem Land region, their stay was only of short duration. And in the following Chapters we shall see what befell some of them.

In later years too, in between the 30's and 40's of this century, came trained scientists, medical doctors, Government officials, Native Affairs patrol officers, military personnel, and other visitors; and we will mention something of their contact in the final part of this work.

Chronologically, however, we close this Chapter on the eve of the Caledon Bay and Woodah Island murders — a period which may rightly be called one of transition, and a prelude to a new era for Arnhem Land.

Finally, let us take a glance at contemporary European opinion, reflecting the attitude of the average Northern Territory settler towards Arnhem Land and its Aborigines.

"... the so-called massive tribe of fierce warriors, the Balamamu, all told only number 240 head of primitive people (the writer is referring specifically to the eastern people, with territory between Caledon Bay and Port Bradshaw); cunning thieves. Their very meek and submissive style is their open sesame to board the boats and enter the camps of the unsuspecting trader. They get into his confidence and when the time is ripe they strike and strike hard. People must remember when they go to that country that the Calboo (i.e., the Garlbu linguistic group) only murder for plunder; and if they can keep their plunder secure they are secure themselves. As Alf Brown said to me, "A man on the beach is safe when he has nothing, but set him on a caddy of tobacco and then — finis".<sup>54</sup>

Dr Strangman's remarks had made little, if any, impression on the mind of the general public. The real reasons for the dissension between the Aborigines and the aliens were not sought. If they had been, perhaps many of the massacres, murders and killings mentioned in the following Chapters could have been avoided altogether. But the way of uncontrolled alien contact with an indigenous group, such as the Arnhem Landers, is strewn with difficulties. The lessons that must be learnt come only with experience, how ever bitter and costly this may be.

## CHAPTER 12

### MACASSAN MURDERS

Now, turning back the years, let us survey some of the murders and massacres that accompanied the last phase of Indonesian contact.

In these final years the Macassans used large quantities of intoxicating liquor in their trading with Aborigines along the coast. Competition with European pearlys and trepangers, the evident antagonism of Government officials and settlers, and the enforcement of custom dues, all helped to upset their previous trading policy. They found it necessary to exploit their association with the Arnhem Land natives. In consequence, a more unscrupulous set of traders took the place of those who had looked on their work almost as a partnership with the Aborigines, with both groups taking a share of the profits that accrued.

They realised now that their days of trading were drawing to an end; no longer would they have the monopoly that they had enjoyed for centuries. So they were forced to obtain, as quickly as possible, as much as they could of the products they desired. Liquor was used as an extra bribe; but as the Aborigines' liking for it increased, the friendly relations between the two groups diminished. At times of ceremony and relaxation, the main entertainment seems to have been drinking. Fights and quarrels resulted, arising mostly from trivial misunderstandings among the traders themselves, or between them and the Aborigines. Sexual orgies were common at such times, and many of the arguments concerned native women.

The Aborigines began to feel that they were being exploited, and were not receiving adequate "pay", in goods and kind, for

their work. Intercourse between these women and the Indonesians became uncontrolled and promiscuous, upsetting the traditional arrangement that the Aborigines should provide "wives" for their trading partners.

The position, from about the middle of last century until the close of this trading, was briefly one of latent antagonism between the two parties. This rose to the surface and found expression in physical violence during times of intoxication, when customary restraints were in abeyance. And the position deteriorated with the passing of time. Some of the Aborigines began to view the Indonesians with suspicion, where before they had felt respect. They were ready on the slightest provocation to find fault, and to resort to force.

There were three principal reasons for the "massacres" and murders on the Arnhem Land coast: interference with women, without the consent of the trading partner, the woman's husband, father or guardian, or the clan as a whole; the desire for more trade goods than they were receiving, or the belief that they were being "underpaid" or cheated; and the accentuation of existing grievances through intoxicating drink. Thus, greed was a predominating motive in some killings, of Macassans and Japanese as well as of Europeans.

These Aborigines had relied on trade, over a long period, to supply needs and desires that had first been inculcated by the alien traders themselves. Their natural response to altered trading conditions, when goods were in short supply and their desires unsatisfied, was to obtain them in any way that they could, by either looting or killing. The position had grown out of abnormal trading conditions, and of the general state of unsettlement that existed at that time along the north coast.

A prau foundered at Rocky Bay, near Yirrkalla, and the crew on swimming to shore were met by hostile natives. One man was killed. The others escaped through the jungle and walked to Melville Bay, where they met other Macassan boats. The goods from the prau were washed up and seized by the natives. Near Trial Bay another Macassan prau, under a captain named Jaming, was wrecked in a storm and looted by local Aborigines. And during heavy rain another prau, under a Macassan captain named

Laululawa, was wrecked on a reef near Rocky Bay. Two natives near Yirrkalla had seen the boat, and walked along the beach to meet it. As they approached Rocky Bay they saw it lying wrecked on a sand bank. They swam out, obtained some tobacco and food, and returned to the main camp to collect more people. When they returned the Macassans asked them to push the prau off the sand bank so that they could repair it: but instead they began to push it towards the shore, where they could more easily loot its contents. Laululawa, trying to protest, was speared, and the others escaped to Melville Bay, where a number of praus were anchored.

Looting of cargoes from wrecked praus and boats seems to have taken place frequently along the eastern and northern coastline, and topographical maps based on native information give relevant details. Three such wrecks occurred at Port Bradshaw, and several others down the coast, when Aborigines were forced to dive to reach the goods they contained.

A number of Macassans were killed in the Wessels, where trading relations seem to have been always somewhat strained. There were not the sheltered waters and abundant trepang found on the eastern and north-eastern mainland, and consequently trade goods were less plentiful. Several entire crews were massacred here. In one case two Macassan boys were saved, and spent the rest of their lives with the Wessel Islanders. When they saw their companions speared they fled into the bush, and hid in the branches of a large tree; here the Aborigines afterwards found them, and took them back to their camp. The boys soon learned the local dialect, were incorporated into the social organisation of the people and eventually initiated. Later one was speared because, it is said, he "ran about too much after women". The other, remaining unmarried, lived to attain old age before he, too, was speared.

At Limbadjapara, in the south of the Wessel Islands near Brown Strait, a number of Macassans were working trepang under the direction of their captain, Teilala. Some Aborigines were walking along the beach towards this place, when they heard these men talking; they had not known the trepangers were there.

"Look, you lot, there's something going on in there", they said to one another. "We'll go down and meet them, and see what they're like."

As they came nearer they saw some of the Macassan dug-out canoes drawn up on the beach. "We'll ask them for a canoe," they decided. They went down to the water's edge, and began to climb into one. The Macassans at once stopped work and rushed over, trying to prevent them from rowing away. They seized its sides and pulled it towards the shore, but the others were too strong and beat them back. Then the Macassans let go, and scrambling into the other canoes rowed back to the prau. Apparently they primed their brass cannon in readiness to fire.

In the meantime the Aborigines had left the canoe, and were sitting along the beach nearby, awaiting the Macassans' return. But the cannon began to fire from the prau and numbers of them were shot. The Macassans came on shore with their guns, while the Aborigines threw spears at them from the jungle. At last one man, seeing so many of his people strewn dead upon the beach, emerged from the jungle. Hooking his spear, he threw it and killed one Macassan. Again he hooked his spear, and threw. The Macassans were shooting at him, but each shot missed and he stood there unharmed. And as he stood, he sang:

"Come on, I am too good for you!  
 You of the Teilala lot have missed me,  
 You with your gun! . . .  
 I am from the Wessels. . . ."

And the Macassans returned to their prau, set sail and glided away from the body-strewn beach.

On the whole, though, there is little detailed evidence of Macassan killings from native sources alone. Within the last decade the Aborigines of Arnhem Land have been inclined to glamorize this Indonesian contact, and to gloss over the antagonisms which were in those days so apparent. Indonesian contact is now agreeably contrasted with that of other alien groups, such as European and Japanese. The old grudges have almost disappeared, and in their place is nurtured a warm regard for the trading partners of long ago.

Various publications and official documents tell us a little of the Macassan murders that took place at that time, although they usually minimise, when they do not entirely ignore, the Aboriginal point of view.

A tragedy rather similar to the one committed by Teilala's crew was the massacre of Aborigines that took place near Entrance Island, at the mouth of the Liverpool River in western Arnhem Land. Searcy remarks that this "is not a favourite camping place, for the natives are awfully treacherous. Some time ago they killed the master of one of the praus, so the next year the brother went there and pretended to start fishing. He managed to make friends with the natives, a lot of whom he induced to cross from the mainland to the island, and then opened upon them with his two-pounders. A few managed to make to the water, but the Malays were in the canoes waiting for them, and finished them."<sup>1</sup>

The same writer relates the killing of some Macassans in Arnhem Bay, near Hardy Island. "We landed at the old camp at the island. To all appearance nobody had been at it for years. It was formed under some immense tamarind trees of a great age. The old fire-place was overgrown with weeds and creepers, and alongside is the grave of one of the masters of a prau, who was murdered there some years ago by the natives. At one time there had been a sort of fence round it. One of my natives who was present when the murder took place, but who says he had nothing to do with it, tells the story. An Aborigine went on board the prau, and demanded some tobacco and spirits. The master refused and then struck him. The man did not appear to take offence, but remained apparently friendly towards the captain, and soon after tempted him to go ashore, and hence into the bush where he was set upon by a number of natives and killed. They then went on board the prau, killed the cook, and helped themselves to the stores."<sup>2</sup>

Robinson, writing from Buffalo Bay in January 1887, tells of further experiences that befell the Malays,<sup>3</sup> when two praus, the Erang Polea and the Lasalasaya, when ashore on the north side of Melville Island and the crews were attacked by natives.

In 1888, two Malays were killed by Aborigines at the mouth

of the Goyder River, in Castlereagh Bay. Searcy, during a trip around the coast in the s.s. "Active", landed Mr D'Arcy Uhr and his party of men to search for cypress pine for Messrs C. and E. Millar. Uhr also had a cutter, and two Malay seamen to attend on the camp that was formed further up the river. However, it turned out that they had been landed at the wrong place, where no timber was procurable. When the "Active" returned to the Goyder 17 days later, Uhr and his party were camped on the beach on the western side of the river, and reported that the natives had murdered the two Malays, and badly damaged the cutter.

Next day, the scene of the murder was pointed out to the party by a Goulburn Island native, "Larrikin", who had witnessed it. No trace was found of the bodies, which apparently had been thrown into the crocodile-infested river. The cutter was discovered in the mangroves, with all the spares and gear cut out of her. Several holes had been made in her top sides and in her lockers, evidently with a tomahawk, and she had a mangrove stump through her bottom. On the sandy beach well back from the mangroves, they found the boat's gear and blood-stained clothing.

Searcy gives the Goulburn Islander's story of the murder. "One day they had just entered the river when the cutter was struck by a squall and capsized. The three men (the two Malays and the Goulburn Island native) then swam to the dingey, which was towing astern. As they got into the boat they saw some natives on the beach, who called to the Malays in broken Macassar dialect to come ashore, which they proceeded to do. When within easy range, the niggers suddenly picked up their spears, which had hitherto been concealed, and threw them at the occupants of the dingey, striking one Malay in the breast and the other in the loins. The men then jumped overboard, capsizing the dingey. The niggers again called out to them to come ashore, and they would not hurt them any more. Larrikin advised them not to go, but to try and swim the river. In their wounded condition they could not do so, and made for the land. The niggers then rushed at them . . . and battered their heads in. . . ."

Larrikin swam three miles to the opposite shore, evading the

natives' spears, and the crocodiles and sharks. When he reached the camp next evening with the news, the party immediately abandoned it, leaving all their belongings behind. Mr Uhr himself was absent exploring. As Searcy says: "when the cutter capsized the Malays lost their firearms, or things might have been different."

Later, the "Active" returned, and Searcy noticed some Aborigines making signs to them from the beach. "Their conduct looked suspicious, and as it was a splendid place for an ambush, we speedily offered an argument which made the blacks beat a retreat." (That is, they made use of their guns.) "Larrikin, who was with us, recognised the murderers in the party. We searched their camp, destroying or carrying away all their valuables, such as dilly bags, bones of defunct relatives, spears, etc. We also found some Malay clothing and several articles belonging to the cutter. A fine Malay canoe, which had for a painter a blood-stained piece of rope from the cutter, was confiscated. Among the articles brought away were some native mosquito nets, made of finely plaited grass, evidently worn over the head while asleep." These were probably the conically-shaped *ngaimara* mats, common along the coast. Mr Uhr had returned: and presently they got the cutter afloat, and left for home.<sup>4</sup>

In 1892 came the spectacular Cape Brogden massacre, which caused an immense sensation at the time. Before this there had been other disasters of the same kind, which had passed unnoticed by the Government. Usually the Indonesians neglected to report them, or took the law into their own hands as they had in the Entrance Island incident. What was more, these killings took place as a rule away from normally patrolled waters. Even in those days the cost of sending a large expedition to investigate rumours would have been forbidding; and it was generally felt that the Malays should look after themselves, and not put the Government to trouble and expense. The fact that some of them paid customs dues and licence fees did not, it was felt, entitle them to police protection during their trading. Needless to say, that was the last thing the Indonesians desired. They wanted to settle matters in their own way, without outside interference.

But the Cape Brogden massacre was a different matter. It took

place not very far from Darwin, in an area frequented by European fishermen, buffalo shooters and Customs officials. And the report came through European sources, from the same Robinson who has been mentioned from time to time in other parts of this work, and was known locally as "Buffalo Bill".

Early in 1892,<sup>5</sup> rumours came drifting to Darwin from the coastal natives that a prau had been wrecked, and the crew killed by Aborigines. Definite news reached official quarters toward the end of the year, when Robinson reported to the Government Resident that this had, in fact, taken place about forty miles east of his camp at Bowen Straits, near Cape Brogden. The "ring-leader", he said, was Wandiwandi (Wandy Wandy), who had already spent some years in Darwin Gaol for the murder of Wingfield, Robinson's mate.

Inspector Foelsche, with a party that included Searcy, set out at once in the steamer "Adelaide". They called first at Port Essington, which was completely deserted, and continued on to the Bowen Straits Revenue Station, where Robinson had his camp. A Malay named Tingha de Hhans was in charge, and here Foelsche picked up some witnesses. Searcy himself crossed to Croker Island with two policemen, in a successful search for an important witness. Then the party went on to Cape Brogden, where a native named Manggeripi (Mangerippy) guided them to the graves of six Malays. The skulls showed signs of having been "knocked about", and so the party took them as evidence. Near the landing site were parts of the wrecked prau. Later on two policemen and several natives from the party went ashore to look for the murderers, planning to go on foot to Malay Bay, where the "Adelaide" would meet them. Next evening, as the ship waited at the rendezvous, the police came out of the bush leading four men in chains. Wandiwandi was among them, and when he saw Searcy, called out, "I no do it." However, they were brought on board the "Adelaide" and settled on the hatch. Searcy remarks that the police party "had had a fairly exciting time". Next morning they took two more Aborigines. The six prisoners were Wandiwandi, Kapundur (Capoondur), Indjiwaraki (Ingeewaraky), Duranit (Dooramite), Minaidji (Mina-edge), and Angarida (Angareeda).

Manggeripi's story of the massacre is related by Searcy.

He had gone with other Aborigines, including the five mentioned, to Mandul, where the prau had been wrecked. They saw six Malays on the beach, but could not understand what they said. Then the Malays said "Tingha", pointing towards Bowen Straits, so the natives began to show them the way. But Kapundur suggested that they should kill them. They guided the Malays to a swamp, where they halted to eat some cabbage palm. Other natives had carried some boxes up from the beach; and the Malays were armed with guns, as well as a bow and arrows, knives, and a revolver. After dinner they all went on towards Robinson's camp. Then Marakite and Kulardnu ran away with the boxes they were carrying, followed by other natives with boxes, including the six prisoners. Manggeripi stayed with the Malays for a while, calling out to the others to return with the boxes; but when they took no notice, he ran away, too. The Aborigines had all gone back to the cabbage palm swamp, and it was not long before the Malays followed and sat down with them there. The natives were discussing whether or not they should kill the six Malays: the six prisoners all thought it would be a good idea.

At Minaidji's suggestion, they left the Malays sitting down by the swamp while they went into the bush to cut sticks. When they came back, Wandiwandi took the knife, bow and arrows, and revolver from the Malay captain, and Duramit took two guns away from another Malay. Then Kapundur hit the captain, who was still sitting down, on the back of his head with a stick. He died straightaway. Minaidji hit another Malay, Angarida killed one in the same way, and Kulardnu killed another by hitting him across the face with a tomahawk. Marakite killed another with a stick. One Malay ran away. Indjiwaraki threw a stick at him, and missed, but Kulardnu turned round and killed him. When they were all dead Kulardnu told Manggeripi to spear the bodies, and then Marakite told Arambun to go and hit them with a stick. They dug holes and buried the Malays, three together in one hole and the others separately.

Then the natives went down to the beach, where Kapundur had suggested they should burn the prau to destroy evidence.



Plate 5a: Naburdu at Yirrkalla; a wife of Djurm.

Plate 5b: Djurm at Yirrkalla; a son of Wauggu





Plate 9: Drawing: A *wuramu* "Collection" ceremony at Port Bradshaw.

Afterwards they returned to the swamp to collect the boxes, and went on to sleep in another swamp. Next morning they moved on to Wark, a fresh water creek, and other men, women and children joined them. Minaidji gave a box to a man named Larrikin, saying that he had got it through killing a Malay, and warning him not to tell anybody. Then he gave a knife and a sarong to another man, Big Jack.

Searcy suggested that the prau appeared to be a stranger, blown down from the Aru Islands, and not one of the regular traders, since the Malayan dialect used by the crew was not familiar to the Aborigines.

On 14 February 1893, a jury convicted eight natives of murder before the Criminal Sittings of the Palmerston (Darwin) Circuit Court. These were Duramit, Kapundur, Indjiwaraki, Kulardnu, Minaidji, Marakite (or Marimiti), Wandiwandi and Angarida. There was no evidence that the deceased Malays had offered any provocation. The Government Resident, without apparently going very deeply into the case, decided that: "Wandiwandi was a clever, intelligent native, and though it does not appear from the evidence that he struck a fatal blow, in my opinion he directed the proceedings of the other natives." Wandiwandi was executed on 25 June 1893, and Minaidji died in gaol.

The defence contended that there had been frequent collision between the natives and the Malays, resulting in loss of life on both sides, and that the prisoners had merely been avenging members of their tribe previously killed by the Malays. It was asserted that Malays undoubtedly killed natives, but that this had happened a long time ago.

The evidence of Kulardnu, Marakite, Duramit, Kapundur and Indjiwaraki revealed that when they had gone down to the beach to assist the wrecked Malays they were warned to go away or they would be shot, and were threatened with guns. They retired then to their camp, near a waterhole. Later the Malays came that way carrying guns, bows and arrows, and knives. All the Aborigines ran to the jungle, and presently came back armed with spears. When the Malays saw them they fired, and the Aborigines retreated again to the jungle. Then Wandiwandi said: "We will kill the Malays, because they have killed plenty of our

people, men and women, before." Indjiwaraki and Angarida, two old men returned, "Don't kill the Malays, we will take them to Tingha." "No," said Wandiwandi, "You and I will kill them. We will go down to the waterhole and kill them all when they sleep, at dinner time."

Wandiwandi went away and mustered all the Aborigines he could find, and they killed the Malays. The men giving this evidence said that they themselves had stayed in the jungle, but most of the tribe had helped in the killing. They repeated that the Malays had been in the habit of shooting the natives.<sup>6</sup>

In 1900, the official records repeat that Wandiwandi had been hanged at Malay Bay in the presence of as many natives as could be rounded up, while the other sentences had been reduced to imprisonment for life. On 25 September 1896, one of them died in gaol. Two others received remission of sentence on 5 November 1897, and two on 1 January 1898. In 1900 a remission of sentence was sought for Kapundur and Kulardnu. It was said that they had helped Foelsche and had always been well-behaved, and fear was felt that "confinement was telling on them".<sup>7</sup>

In 1895 two more praus, the Bonding Patola and the Tinna Motaya, were wrecked in the Gulf of Carpentaria; but all the crew except three eventually reached Bowen Straits, where they were fed and helped by Robinson.

There was another massacre in 1902, but little direct evidence is available.

The police had word from Mr Brown, Customs Officer at Bowen Straits, that since reporting this incident he had seen the captain of the prau that brought the only survivor to his station. The Malay captain could not locate on the chart the actual place where the survivor was picked up, and had no idea where the prau was wrecked or where the massacre took place, except that it was somewhere on the north-eastern coast.

The suggestion was made that a police party should be sent to that area, but Mr Brown considered that it could not hope to find the place except by chance. The Government Resident, writing to the Minister Controlling the Northern Territory, recommended that in these circumstances, and in view of the heavy expenses that would be involved without achieving any

## MACASSAN MURDERS

result, no further steps be taken in the matter. Later it was suggested that police might be sent there during the next trip of the regular steamer to the McArthur River. Another reference to the proposed police party states that "it is quite impracticable for the police to do the work required if they went by the next contract trip (that is by steamer to the McArthur River), as they would have to be left on the coast somewhere between Cape Wilberforce and Melville Bay to look for remains of murdered crew: they would have to carry swags and rations, firearms, etc., on foot in a country where water at this season is known to be scarce. Furthermore, the only survivor is anxious to get back to his own country, and by the time the party returns he will have left the Territory, and all chance of bringing the murderers to justice would be lost. It is impossible to say that an expedition now will be successful, as there are numerous islands in the neighbourhood to which natives may escape in canoes. . . ."<sup>8</sup>

The Malay survivor was brought to Palmerston (Darwin). Officials learned that he was an Arab named Ahmat, a native of Banda Island in the Banda Sea. The prau, with himself and ten other men, was about six tons, and had left Banda for Seram (Ceram) under the direction of a captain named Dela. After leaving Banda they struck a severe squall, and their sails were completely destroyed. For 29 days they drifted, until at last sighted the Australian mainland near Cape Wilberforce. Trying to anchor, they lost the rope; and in heavy seas the prau was dashed against some rocks until it became a total wreck. When they had been on shore for eight days, two Aborigines came up to them and were given rice; but later a large number turned up, and began to club and spear them. Ahmat himself was wounded, but ran away into the bush and lived for 14 days on shell-fish. Then he saw some Malay canoes gathering trepang: they picked him up, and brought him to Bowen Straits.

However, the majority of these killings were never reported, and the rumours which did reach Darwin were never investigated. Only one case, the Cape Brogden affair, received official attention. But from what we do know, we are able to see the underlying motives for the murders: mutual antagonism and distrust,

which were much less apparent in their earlier contact with the Aborigines, and the natives' desire for the Indonesians' possessions — another feature of this final period, when normal trading alliances were disrupted. There were, of course, other reasons as well, but these two predominated.

Afterwards, when the Indonesians had gone from the coast, the same trends still continued: but the aliens in this case were the Europeans and Japanese who had taken the place of the early traders.

## CHAPTER 13

### EUROPEAN KILLINGS

We have already seen something of European contact along the north coast of Arnhem Land, and of the friction that developed between the two groups. Now we can look rather more closely at some of the incidents that marked the troubled period of contact in the nineteenth century. Probably the first killing of a European in this region occurred during Mathew Flinders' voyage,<sup>1</sup> when Morgan, the master's mate of the "Investigator", was speared by natives at Blue Mud Bay. But here we must confine ourselves to more recent years, when dissension was more general and more apparent.

Europeans visiting this north coast, particularly in the east and north-east, were usually careful in their dealings with the Aborigines. Most of them were in the habit of going armed, since it was generally believed that these natives were "wild" people, ready on the least provocation to spear a stranger. Moreover, there was mutual antagonism between the Europeans and Indonesians, and it was officially contended that these traders had incited the Aborigines to repulse white settlement or invasion of their territory.<sup>2</sup>

Europeans visiting this eastern side to work for trepang, or to gather pearl-shell or other products, made little use of local labour. With some exceptions, they preferred to obtain native labourers or crews from Darwin, Port Essington, Melville and Bathurst Islands or from Goulburn Island. The general employment of local natives did not come about till the first quarter of this century, and then the numbers were small. In the western

region, however, local Aborigines had been used by Europeans from the first years of settlement.

Most of the early trepangers, pearlers, beach-combers and adventurers, and some even in recent years, were primarily concerned with exploiting the natural resources (marine products and timber). When they found it necessary to trade with Aborigines, they were far from generous in their payments. This state of affairs did not unduly concern the Arnhem Landers while the Macassans were still trading. It was only when this source of obtaining goods was closed that they turned their attention to Europeans, hoping that they would fulfil their requirements.

But conditions had changed. The Europeans were unwilling to take up the threads of Macassan trading. And so the Aborigines were denied commodities which they had come to feel were essential to them, and which had become increasingly scarce during the closing years of Indonesian contact. The old employment and trading markets evaporated, and in their place came haphazard and unaccustomed treatment — casual trading at "undercut" rates, and spasmodic employment. No longer were groups of natives employed in a specific industry, as about the Indonesian bases during days gone by. Europeans required only individual natives for part-time work. The Aborigines were forced to fall back more seriously on their indigenous habits of food-collecting, and to adapt themselves to changed activities. This adjustment resulted at first in general unsettlement. The Aborigines resented what was happening, and considered themselves to be suffering from a legitimate grievance. To them, the only way to combat this was by force of arms.

Here, then, were conditions similar to those that had resulted in the Macassan killings, reinforced by an additional grudge. But the Aborigines did not often resort to violence, unless directly or deliberately provoked. Many of them were coming to realise, however vaguely, that the small influx of Europeans into Arnhem Land was supported by a network of white officialdom with power to organise punitive parties against people who defied their rule.

The Europeans usually "played safe", but at times supplied the natives with intoxicating drink in order to obtain women.

This was especially evident in western Arnhem Land, and led to the wide spread of venereal diseases, with subsequent sterility and depopulation among the Aborigines. Promiscuity between European traders and native women was not entirely absent in the eastern region, but it did not have the same effects as in the west, principally because contact there was less intensive. Much of the trouble that resulted in spearings and killings was caused by the Europeans' interference with native women.

One white man for example, whom the Aborigines call Doni, was killed in the following way. He was working for pearl-shell in the shallows around Arnhem Bay, and had been persuading the local people to send him their young women. In return he promised them many things — cloth, knives, food and tobacco, goods of which they were much in need at the time. But at last the Aborigines tired of his demands and of his delay in fulfilling his promises.

One morning he went out by boat into the Bay to dive for pearl-shell. While he was out working, Doni's Goulburn Island crew boys spoke to the local natives. "It's better we should kill this white man", they said. "He's no good for us: and no good for you people, always spoiling your young girls". So the Ngelgala Aborigines of that place swam out to where he was diving and speared him to death. Then the Goulburn Islanders distributed food and goods from Doni's boat and set sail toward the west. When they were near their home islands they ran the boat aground and set fire to it, to cover up evidence of their actions.

We are not told how the Darwin authorities found out about this, but soon afterwards, so the Aborigines say, the "murderers" were apprehended and taken to gaol. Popular opinion in the north-eastern corner has it that the Europeans, in revenge, poured kerosene around the cell or wooden hut in which the prisoners were locked and "burnt them all up". This incident is said to have happened before any Missions were established along the coast, and just before a survey ship came around the north-east coast planting flags at various points — that is, a little prior to 1916.

Another incident took place on Elcho Island, after the first Mission station was established. The European's name was "Mikan-

taia (or MacIntyre). The Aborigines say that he was a lay missionary there, but possibly he was employed by the Naptha Petroleum Company: his nickname was "Bindaljin", because he was always swearing. Apparently they did not like him, for he had the habit of hitting them on the least excuse.

It so happened that this man was out in a canoe with two Aborigines (both of whom were working in Darwin in 1946-47). In the middle of the channel between Elcho and Howard Islands they deliberately capsized the boat, and when "Mikantaia" began to swim towards the shore, one of them hit him with a paddle. When he was finally drowned they righted the canoe and heaved the body aboard. Then they paddled to the shallows and threw it on to a sandbank, hurried away to the mainland and disappeared into the bush.

Other natives out fishing came on the body, high and dry on the sand. They noticed the drag mark of the "murderers'" canoe but could not find any tracks of the dead man: and they thought to themselves, "Maybe those two killed this white man". But they said nothing about it to anyone and brought him back to the Mission station. The missionaries buried him there, evidently assuming that he had been drowned.

In western Arnhem Land, too, there were a number of murders. The most spectacular of these was perhaps the killing of Thomas Wingfield in December 1879. Wingfield and E. O. Robinson had taken up Croker Island for trepanging in about 1877. As Robinson writes:<sup>3</sup> "We grew some good tobacco there, but just as we had made a good homestead, had a nice piece of ground cultivated and were getting along well, Wingfield was killed by natives while I was in Port Darwin. It was a knock for me on my return to find nothing but the cat to welcome me, the dwelling ransacked and the poor old chap buried in the sand about six yards from the house. Part of his face was exposed and the fowls were pecking at it. I had only two black boys with me, and the venture was given up".

After finding his partner dead Robinson crossed to Port Essington, contacted two white men there, and returned to the Island to collect native information concerning the killing. He learned that on 13 December there had been a fight in which

"some lubras were killed". Several of the men came and asked Wingfield for grog, but he refused to give them any; he had five gallons of rum hidden in his hut. Later, when Wingfield was asleep, Wandiwandi (who has been mentioned in regard to the more recent Cape Brogden massacre) and "Maccaroni" killed him.<sup>4</sup>

Other particulars were gathered later.<sup>5</sup>

Robinson reported the murder and gave information in January of the following year. At that time all the Aborigines who had formerly been camped near Wingfield and Robinson's settlement, including the real offenders, had gone to Moore's Bay and scattered east along the coast. On Robinson's information, warrants were issued against four natives, and two troopers were sent to Port Essington in the Government boat "Flying Cloud" to arrest them if possible. They returned unsuccessful, without learning anything about the real facts of the case, or the whereabouts of the murderers. All the Aborigines had disappeared, and the wet monsoonal season had set in so that the country was too widely inundated for travelling.

A second visit to Port Essington was made a little later. The Police Inspector writes: "On my arrival at the settlement on the 2nd of June (1880), I found only a few friendly natives at the Cobourg Cattle Company's station, and ascertained that none of the natives who were at the scene of the murder had been seen since, and could not be induced to come near the station. Knowing it to be useless for me to go in search of them, I despatched old Jack Davis, a Port Essington native, to find and bring in a few natives who were present when Wingfield was killed, assuring him that I would not growl — as they call it — but only wanted them to tell me the truth. After waiting five days, three of them, named "Harry Davis", Moiitbuk (Moy-juit-book), and Manjidbuwu (Man-jid-boo-woo), came in and supplied the following particulars". These differ from those which Robinson had obtained.

On the morning of the murder a native named Malgana (Malganah) supplied Wingfield with some jungle-fowl eggs, for which he received some rum and tobacco. Shortly afterwards he came back and asked Wingfield for more, which was given him.

He went off to the camp close to the white men's house, but afterwards returned again for more. This time he was refused. A quarrel developed in the native camp about some dugong meat, as a result of all the rum they had been drinking. Wingfield went down with a gun, ordering them not to make so much noise. They grew quiet then and he returned to the house.

After a time Malgana came to Wingfield again, demanding tobacco, and again he was refused. Wingfield placed his revolver on top of a cask of rum; as Malgana stood on the verandah he picked it up and shot him dead. Aboriginal witnesses declared that Malgana had no spear and did not threaten to spear Wingfield. But the Police Inspector comments: "I very much doubt this, as the natives admitted that Wingfield picked up a spear and broke it before he shot Malgana, who according to the natives' statement was drunk at the time". The five natives who were working for Wingfield and Robinson had been given grog by the dead man in payment for their work.

The natives took Malgana's body to the camp and sent for Wandiwandi and others who were camped about six miles away.

Some time afterwards Wandiwandi went up to the house where Wingfield was asleep, and killed him with a tomahawk. He got a number of natives to come up and hit the body with sticks, "so as to make them all implicated in the murder which they term 'all about blackfellow kill him'." Then they collected some rice, biscuits and rum and went to Wandiwandi's camp six miles off.

Next day, Wandiwandi, "Maccaroni", Kulumu (Cooloomoo), Urcur and Moitbuk went back to the house and filled the white men's canoe with rice, sugar, rum and other goods. They paddled it over to a small island in Mount Norris Bay, while the rest of the natives went along the coast to a place called Wanggarang.

The Police Inspector comments: "The immediate cause of Wingfield's death was his killing the native in the morning, and also the whole sad occurrence originated through supplying the natives with intoxicating liquor; Robinson being absent from the island when Wingfield was killed . . ." He continues, "The actual murder was committed by one man only, namely,

Wandiwandi, the noted murderer of Mr Price in the Torres Strait Islands about two years ago, and this native is now looked upon by the members of his own tribe as a hero". Records are not available regarding Price's murder, but this may have happened some time before 1879, when some Aborigines from Goulburn Island and Port Essington were "kidnapped" and taken to the Torres Straits to work in the pearlind industry. Some of them later escaped in a canoe and found their way back along the coast to their home camps.

The Police Inspector, in his report to the Government Resident, was certain that he could get Wandiwandi alive, "at some considerable expense to the Government, say £50". It was useless, he said, for Europeans to go in pursuit of him, as there were too many islands and inlets near Croker Island and in the adjacent bays. The natives had large wooden canoes, obtained from the Malays, and they could easily escape. "I can see only one way that may prove successful in capturing Wandiwandi, and that is by offering a good reward to the Malays when they return to these shores in January next. They employ nearly all the natives on the coast and Wandiwandi is known to all of them. I believe that if a reward of £50 was offered to them they would bring him to Port Darwin or to Port Essington".

In the meantime the police were trying to send some of the Woolner and Alligator River natives, who had been responsible for capturing the escaped convict Abdoolah, overland to Port Essington to catch Wandiwandi. Several of these Aborigines were then in Darwin and had promised to go as soon as they had finished an initiation ceremony. "Should these Aborigines be successful", states the Police Inspector, "the expenses, of course, would not be much".

In August 1880, it was said that if Wandiwandi were committed for trial on the capital charge he would have to be sent down to Adelaide.<sup>6</sup> He had ultimately been apprehended by the police, but the records do not say whether he was brought in by the Malays or by his own compatriots. Eventually he was released and returned to his country, where he became implicated in the Cape Brogden massacre and was finally hanged at Malay Bay before a crowd of his own people.

Four years earlier, two Europeans named Permain and Borrodaile, who were exploring the Port Essington district, were reported missing and later thought to have been murdered by Aborigines. Not much is known of the actual circumstances, but the following notes were compiled at that time.<sup>7</sup>

In 1875, Permain and Borrodaile were supposed to have been killed at Tor Rock in the Port Essington district. McMinn writes as follows:

"On arrival at Port Essington I was informed by Mr Robinson that certain natives not belonging to Port Essington had recently come in with information that two white men had been killed by a neighbouring tribe (as far as I could learn, the East Alligator blacks). The natives who gave this information belonged to a tribe intermediate between Port Essington and the East Alligator River. It is said that these latter people communicated to the intermediate tribe that they had killed two white men, and that prior to having killed them they had robbed them of everything except their books (no doubt the journal and other books necessary to an explorer). The explorers had declined to give up the latter, and to obtain them the Aborigines had killed the two men".

The intermediate group, professing friendship with the Europeans, was said to have fought with those who had killed the two white men. The actual murder apparently took place somewhere near Tor Rock. McMinn took as interpreter Smiler, a Port Essington native, hoping to discover further details, but could obtain only repetition of previous statements. It was then assumed that since Permain and Borrodaile were the only two white men known to be in that area, and since they were classified as missing, the story must necessarily relate to them. McMinn observed that: "there is at any rate sufficient *prima facie* evidence to justify an examination being made of the country described above to set the matter at rest."

An expedition accordingly set out. On 19 April 1875, Captain Marsh reported<sup>8</sup> that he had landed ponies and a party with equipment at a bay near Tor Rock, under the direction of McMinn, who had engaged natives at Port Essington on 27 March. No further details are recorded, and no reference is made

to the murderers of Permain and Borrodaile, but we may assume that McMinn's party punished the natives in this region. The land party re-embarked on 10 April, after an absence of five days.

In 1898 two more Europeans, T. Moore and K. MacKenzie, were murdered at the King River. They had been buffalo shooting, and were said to have been killed by "civilized" natives, buffalo hunters carrying firearms with which they shot the white men. Later two natives were taken prisoner: and the Government Resident writes, "I understand from the Police Inspector that the primary cause of this murder was the Europeans' interference with native women."<sup>9</sup> In another report<sup>10</sup> he repeats this conviction. "The evidence, in my judgment, clearly showed that the murder of the men, Moore and MacKenzie, was committed by the natives in consequence of the former taking some lubras, *nolens volens*, from their tribe, and appropriating them for their own purposes, and otherwise ill-treating one of the natives. They evidently attacked the deceased men unawares, otherwise probably the encounter would have resulted in some of the natives being shot and the remainder 'dispersed', and no one would have been the wiser. Those who escaped would no doubt have taken vengeance on the first white man they saw. Considering the vast area of country, sparsely populated, over which it is utterly impossible to maintain any control, it is difficult indeed to suggest any remedy which would *effectually* cope with the evil which undoubtedly exists. Those who occupy the "back blocks" are, in most cases, a law unto themselves as regards their relations with the natives."

E. R. Masson mentions<sup>11</sup> the murder of Jim Campbell, speared by natives at Junction Bay between 1913 and 1914. Campbell was apparently "very rough on blacks", and had turned trepanger to evade the police further south. A police lugger was sent out from Darwin to find and arrest the native murderers, and succeeded in collecting nine prisoners and fifteen witnesses with their wives and babies. When they arrived in Darwin the prisoners were taken to Fanny Bay Gaol, and the witnesses to Kahlin Beach compound (later transferred to Bagot Road). Masson describes the trial, which seems to have been particularly interesting, and

reveals that Campbell brutally assaulted an old native as well as others. Three prisoners were discharged, five were found guilty of murder; and the remaining one, against whom there was no evidence, was declared not guilty. Counsel for the Defence stated that the dead man had been grossly cruel to the natives of that country. The death sentence on the five natives was later commuted to imprisonment for life.

In the official documents, murders of Europeans in the eastern region are rare. Records relating to the Northern Territory<sup>12</sup> from 1870 to 1909 mention only the cases of Lewis, Spencer,<sup>13</sup> Walker and a couple of others. In this context we may note the murder of Captain Thom on Vanderlin Island, in the Sir Edward Pellew Group in the Gulf of Carpentaria. Patrick ("Paddy") Cahill, afterwards in charge of the Oenpelli Government cattle station,<sup>14</sup> writes in a letter to the Government Resident:<sup>15</sup> "The Pellew group of islands are permanently inhabited by natives and a tribe of about 150 are on Vanderlin Island, the largest of the group. They are most brutal and inhuman, and most of the murders that have been committed in the vicinity are attributed to them. For example, the encounter of Captain Thom in which he lost his life. In that case, about forty of the Vanderlin Islanders boarder the cutter during the night and the three men on board had to fight their way on to deck. Captain Thom was killed and one of the other men was badly tomahawked. Eventually, however, they managed to drive the natives off the boat, and setting sail took the body of Captain Thom up to McLeod's Landing where they buried it."

Cahill believed that the long intercourse of these islanders with the Malay trepangers had rendered them more bloodthirsty. "On one occasion," he records, "I visited the north-west island and saw about 180 natives, some of whom belonged to the Vanderlin Island: they made signs for us to go on shore, but we did not consider it judicious. They came off in canoes but we had a good breeze behind us and soon ran into the river. A strong party could undoubtedly induce them to leave the islands, but not for long."

These isolated murders were in themselves of minor importance, and did not have serious repercussions in the native com-

munities; but they did result in occasional punitive expeditions by European settlers and police. Although these expeditions killed many Aborigines about Caledon and Blue Mud Bays in the east, and at Croker Island, Port Essington and the Cobourg Peninsula in the west, they did not in the eastern region seriously disturb the structure of native society. In the west, however, other forces were at work, and disintegration was comparatively rapid. In the whole eastern area the clans and tribes were welded more closely together. They were forced by circumstances to rely on their own natural resources and to devise means of defending their territory.

Today we would call such defence "guerilla warfare", and perhaps look upon the defenders as patriots. The Aborigines regarded Europeans visiting this coast as intruders, violating their territorial rights; and when the strangers interfered with their womenfolk, threatened them with guns, or encroached on their preserves, they responded according to their tribal dictates and conscience. Their greed, too, had been accentuated by years of contact with traders, and they came to feel that certain goods were necessary to them. If they could not obtain these by peaceful means, then they resorted to other measures, like stealing and killing. Intoxicating drink served only to bring their grievances or latent desires to the surface, and to make them still more quarrelsome and violent.

In the next Chapter we shall glance at the notorious murder of three Europeans on Woodah Island, near Groote Eylandt. These, with the Caledon Bay massacre of Japanese, led to the beginning of a new epoch in the history of Arnhem Land.

## CHAPTER 14

### THE WOODAH ISLAND MURDERS

In the early 1930's, several important murders were committed in eastern and north-eastern Arnhem Land. The reaction to these in other parts of Australia brought about some change in existing conditions, involving a pacification expedition, greater activity on the part of the Missions, and eventually a saner and rather more constructive approach to the whole problem of Arnhem Land.

The Woodah Island killings followed the massacre of several Japanese at Caledon Bay on 17 September 1932. On 1 August 1933, Constable McColl was killed on Woodah Island;<sup>1</sup> and a few months later, in November, F. Traynor and W. Fagan were speared.<sup>2</sup>

In the middle of 1933 a police party had reached Woodah and Groote Eylandt, and left for Blue Mud Bay on 18 July in the Mission boat, "Hope", to enquire into the reported Japanese massacre. On 9 August, the "Hope", with Mounted-Constable V. Hall on board,<sup>3</sup> returned with the news that McColl had been speared and had died at Woodah. On 27 September the Mission lugger "Holly" arrived from the Roper River with more police; and on the 28th of the same month, we read in the Groote Eylandt Half-Caste Mission *Records* that the police prepared to "settle in". On 13 October they put up barbed wire entanglements outside the Mission fences, anticipating an attack. On 4 December the "Holly" left with the Revs. Warren and Dyer, and crew, to contact the Aborigines at Caledon Bay. On 12 December, while they were away, the natives at Groote Eylandt reported that a large number of "Balamumu" people were at

Cape Barrow, waiting to way-lay the police party they supposed was coming in that direction. They intended also to visit the Mission, and had "hostile intentions". The police at once ordered safety precautions to be taken. All the Mission people, they said, were to sleep close together at night. Fasteners were put on upstairs doors, and a continuous watch was kept. A couple of days later, on the 14th, they heard of the murder of Traynor and Fagan, "which is said to have taken place off Woodah Island by the outlaw gang".

It was not until 31 January, 1934, that the police at Groote Eylandt released the Mission from its state of emergency; and at about this time the trepanger, Fred Gray, makes his appearance on the scene. On 16 March the Rev. Warren buried the remains of Fagan and Traynor, at a ceremony attended by the police. And on 29 March Dyer mentioned that Dagiar (Tuckiar) from Caledon Bay, and Barani (Parraner) from Woodah Island, both implicated in these murders, were going to Darwin.

This summary shows us the movements of the various characters who appear in the two murder trials, and the state of tension that existed at the time of the police visit to Groote. The case of Fagan and Traynor came before the Darwin Supreme Court earlier than Dagiar's trial for the murder of McColl, and so we shall deal with them in that order here.

On 15 November 1933, the Sydney Press<sup>4</sup> gave large headlines to the killing of Fagan and Traynor. "Wild blacks of Arnhem Land," it announced dramatically, "speared to death two white men who had been posted missing since February."

Fagan was a young Tasmanian, and Frank Traynor formerly a Sydney hairdresser. Failing to find work in Darwin, they had set sail for Thursday Island in the Torres Straits, in an old unseaworthy cutter. Definite news of the tragedy came from trepanger Fred Gray. He had left Darwin on a fishing trip a month before, when the police, suspecting a plot to steal his boat, had prevented a crew of Darwin unemployed from sailing with him. Gray's message was sent by radio from Milngimbi Methodist Mission station, and he reported that English Company Island natives had told him of the murder. The two men were surprised aboard their cutter, and speared; then the natives stripped the boat of

everything portable, beached it, and set it on fire. Gray intended, he said, to make inquiries independently of the Church Missionary Society's peace expedition to the Caledon Bay tribesmen (an outcome of the Japanese massacre).

He was the last white man to see Traynor and Fagan alive. Poorly equipped, ignorant of seamanship, and sailing an old patched cutter, they had taken four months on the voyage from Darwin to Milingimbi. They continued towards the east, in spite of warnings that they would meet with disaster, and Gray himself had towed them a hundred miles to Arnhem Bay in February of that year. On the day that the newspapers published this information, the Minister for the Interior, Perkins, had a message from Colonel Weddell, Administrator of the Northern Territory; this said that the two Europeans had probably been killed by the murderers of Constable McColl, and that the killers were believed to be Mirera (Meerella) and Jim Barion (that is, apparently, Djimbarjun).

On 3 August 1934, the Darwin *Northern Standard* reported proceedings of the trial of Dagiar and Mirera, charged with killing an unknown man at Woodah Island. They pleaded not guilty.

Gray's statement was as follows: ". . . in February last on my way to Groote Island, I met Traynor and Fagan at Milingimbi. . . . I towed them to Elcho Island and from there to Arnhem Bay and they then went down the Gulf, making for Thursday Island. If they were proceeding along the coast of the Gulf they would pass close to Woodah Island. . . ." He was shown some human bones at Groote Eylandt, but could not identify them; and he saw part of a boat, which he considered looked like Fagan and Traynor's.

Then Rev. Dyer, of Oenpelli Mission station, told the Court: ". . . in January I went to Blue Mud Bay to look for a wreck I heard was there. When we were at Caledon Bay, Clara (see Chapter 11) told us about the wreck. We went into Grimble Bay on 18 January: Mr Warren went ashore and questioned the Aborigines: Tuckiar (Dagiar) was present on the boat when the latter were questioned. They were very frightened and would not tell us much. A storm blew us to the top of Grimble Bay and we saw wreckage of a boat on the shore. . . ." This part

of the evidence contains little information. Dyer and Warren had questioned Aborigines, including Dagiari, and bones were collected on the north-eastern side of Woodah: but no bones were produced by the Crown. Dyer added that he and Warren had found some of the wreckage in the natives' camps, and that he had never at any time had direct speech with the two accused. All conversations had been carried on by means of two interpreters. One interpreter, a half-caste on the Groote Eylandt Mission, could have been obtained, and the Judge asked why this man had not been brought to Darwin. Mr J. S. Harris, Acting Crown Law Officer, who prosecuted on behalf of the Crown, replied that he had one interpreter, and one native who had heard the accused making confessions.

Dagiari, declared Dyer, was an elder of the tribe. He observed that: "There was a half-caste Japanese child amongst the blacks, which indicated that the natives sold their women", but this was hardly relevant to the case. "We handed some of the wreckage found at Woodah Island to Constable Morey. Mounted-Constables Hall, Graham and Mahoney were present."

His Honour reverted to the question of the bones, which had been described as the remains of the dead men. He thought that the public was entitled to an explanation, since these were not exhibited in the Court.

Hall was called, and said that he was at Groote with Warren, Dyer, and Morey when Warren handed over some bones to him. These were subsequently buried.

Barani then gave his evidence, through an interpreter called Paddy.<sup>5</sup> 'Dagiari and Mirera (here spelt Merara) came up to Bickerton Island, where they told me that they had good news. It was the dry season before last. These two men told me that a boat had come, and that they had gone over to look at it. They saw two white men on board, and Dagiari got a canoe and rowed out. The men said to him, "You come here and we will give you a job. We'll give you a tomahawk and you can go and cut wood for us." So Dagiari and Mirera went to cut wood, and later brought it back to the boat. They were told to get more wood, and then they would be given some tobacco. Both of them had

dinner on the boat, gathered more wood and returned with their load. Then the two Europeans said, "We want some lubra."

'Dagiar and Mirera replied that they would return to the camp and tell the women to come up. Afterwards they returned in their canoe with two lubras and were given tobacco, then went back, leaving the women on board with the two Europeans. When they reached the camp they told the other natives about this, and made plans for the morning.

'Just before dawn Dagiar and Mirera, with Djimbarjun (Jin-bar-rie), picked up their spears and set off. They glided silently up to the anchored boat in their canoe, tied it up, then climbed on board and called out. The two white men, down below with the women, woke up. As they did so Dagiar caught one by the arm while Mirera caught the other, his wife; and they threw them into the canoe. Both natives then grabbed sticks, and so did the white men. One white man said, "I'll fight you." But Dagiar replied, "If you fight me, I'll fight you," and hit him. The other European hit Mirera, who pushed him overboard. He swam towards the shore, but disappeared before he reached there. Then Dagiar killed the other, who fell into the water and sank.

'Dagiar and Mirera returned to the camp, and got two or three other men to come back with them to loot the stores.'

Barani was then cross-examined by Fitzgerald (for the accused) through an interpreter. It appeared that one of the white men hit Mirera first, on the back of the head. This was the European who had swum away. The two Aborigines had allegedly killed them to get back the two lubras, whom they refused to let go. Dagiar and Mirera were forced to go down the hold to get the women. The natives insisted that they had used sticks, and not spears. As the cross-examination revealed, some of the evidence was conflicting.

Harry, a Mission "boy" from Milingimbi (now dead), said that Mirera had given him the following version of the incident. 'The boat came along and anchored this side of Groote, at Gura-mura. Mirera went out by canoe, and the Europeans gave him tobacco and asked him to collect wood. They all got into the canoe and went on shore. The two white men walked along the beach, then went to the native camp and obtained two girls.

They took them to the beach and thence to the boat. Mirera, coming back from cutting wood, saw the women and the Europeans rowing out to the boat. He took a canoe and loaded it up with wood, while Dagiār got a firestick and told the whole camp the news of the girls' abduction. Dagiār, Mirera and Djimbarjun went out to the boat and climbed on board, and Mirera called out to the women, "Get up and come quick, these white men have done wrong." He grabbed the women and put them in the canoe, just as one white man hit him on the back of the head with a stick. Then the European, "like half drunk", jumped over into the sea and swam away, but he soon sank. Dagiār and Djimbarjun pushed the other European, who accidentally hit his head and fell overboard, and sank down into the water. Mirera and Dagiār took a half bag of flour and an old blanket: Djimbarjun looked around for more, but could find nothing else. Then they went ashore. They were camped there for two nights, and then found a dead body on the shore.' Cross-examined by Fitzgerald, Harry revealed that the two women were wives of Mirera.

After the address Judge Wells summed up, pointing out that the Crown case was weak. The jury returned a verdict of Not Guilty. Mirera was thereupon discharged, and Dagiār was taken back to Fanny Bay Gaol to await trial for the alleged murder of McColl.

Harry's version agrees in most details with one contained in the files of the Groote Eylandt Mission,<sup>6</sup> signed by Dyer and Gray; but there are some deviations.

The Mission document relates that the two Europeans went ashore to obtain food and water, and were in contact with five men, including Dagiār, Mirera and Djimbarjun, and some women and children. While they were getting water from a native well the white men persuaded two women to go on to the cutter with them. Their husbands were away cutting wood at the time, and did not give their consent: when they returned to the camp, the other women told them about it. When Mirera, Djimbarjun and Dagiār arrived at the boat they climbed on board and looked into the cabin, where they saw the women with the two men. One white man jumped out and hit Mirera over the head with a paddle; this blow knocked him overboard, and partly stunned

him. Djimbarjun recovered Mirera and pulled him into the canoe, bleeding at the nose. Then he picked up a piece of firewood, and threw it at the white man, hitting him and sending him overboard. It was this man who swam away, but was drowned. Dagiар and the other man had a tussle, in which the European was thrown towards the edge of the boat. As he fell he hit his head, toppled overboard, and sank. Next day, the Aborigines brought the boat in nearer to the shore, and looted what little there was in it. However, they did not anchor it properly, so that a strong wind took it away to Grindall Bay, where it was eventually found by the missionaries.

This case reveals the unsatisfactory results obtained by using native interpreters, as well as the conflicting evidence that was put forward. The evident cause of the murder was the Europeans' interference with native women, without the consent of their husband(s), although Barani's version declared that Mirera and Dagiар had themselves brought along the two women. However, we need not here examine the case in detail. What interests us are the features that demonstrate the state of alien contact on the Arnhem Land coast.

This trial was followed by the McColl murder case. Dagiар was charged before Judge Wells that on 1 August 1933, he "feloniously did kill" A. S. McColl. Mr Harris, Acting Crown Law Officer, appeared to prosecute; and Mr Fitzgerald, acting for the Defence, entered a plea of not guilty. The facts were as follows.<sup>7</sup>

On 1 August, Constables McColl, Morey, Mahoney and Hall were at Woodah Island searching for some Aborigines. They found some women, and while they were questioning them an alarm was given. The other three left McColl in charge, and scattered to see what was happening. Then Morey and Hall heard shots, and went to help Mahoney. But they could not find McColl and the women, although they searched until midnight. Next morning they found McColl's body lying in a pool of blood with a spear beside it, and a wound in the chest.

Hall was called, and said that on 1 August he was in the company of Morey, Mahoney and McColl on Woodah Island. "We left the police launch with four trackers to try and make contact

with some niggers. . . . After walking about 20 miles we reached an abo. camp on the edge of a jungle. The camp was deserted but the fires were warm. We camped for dinner and posted the four trackers as outposts. The trackers reported something and we surrounded a number of lubras. We handcuffed them together and brought them back to the police camp and questioned them concerning the murder of Japanese at Caledon Bay. A tracker reported something and the party, with the exception of McColl, entered the jungle, crossed through on to the sand on to the beach. Two trackers were left with McColl. Two accompanied the three police. We reached the opposite side of the point to find all the natives had already crossed as we found their tracks. We spread out in extended order and went back to where we had left McColl. The party became separated. I heard a number of shots and ran to where I could see Morey in the middle of a clearing. Morey said, 'Did you shoot?' I said, 'No.' On the first occasion there were three or four shots at least. After speaking to Morey we heard another shot or two on our right. We ran in the direction of the shots and came into a clearance where we saw Mahoney reloading a pistol. He told us something and showed us his hat which was cut through the puggaree. The scrub was very high. In consequence of what Mahoney told us we hurried back to where we had left McColl. We arrived at the place but McColl was not there, neither were the lubras. The two trackers we had left with McColl were there. We then searched for McColl until sundown. . . . The following morning we picked up McColl's tracks . . . we found McColl lying on the edge of the jungle . . . McColl's revolver was lying alongside of him. We examined the revolver. Three cartridges had been fired. The third shot had misfired. McColl had no spare cartridges. . . . We buried the body nearby." Judge Wells, when he learned that the trackers were not available as witnesses, asked Mr Harris to find out why they were not present.

Continuing, Hall said that when the tracker gave the alarm he got the idea that danger was impending. The handcuffs had been removed from the detained lubras by Morey before leaving McColl. Judge Wells asked if Morey was present, and Mr Harris replied, "No." Asked again, he said he had no explanation for his absence.

Hall related that when he was at Groote, on 21 December 1933, Mr Warren and Rev. Dyer came and handed the police party some bones, including a skull. This was identified as McColl's; the rest of the bones had all been chewed up by dogs.

On 3 August 1934 the case was continued, and Hall, cross-examined by Fitzgerald, replied that the questioning of the native women took about half an hour. They were handcuffed to prevent them from escaping. At first they had run away in fear, "but later on that fear was allayed". They were given tobacco to smoke, and when they were left in McColl's charge they were not frightened. Hall, himself, had assisted at the questioning. During this time there was no sign of male Aborigines. The trackers left with McColl were Dick and Roper Tommy, two experienced police trackers. The first lot of shots Hall heard were Mahoney's, and so were the second; he did not hear McColl's shots. A tracker named Paddy gave the first alarm. He said, "Mob of blackfellows, look out", and gestured with his arm. Tracker Paddy corroborated Hall's evidence.

Barani (through interpreter Paddy) told the following story.<sup>8</sup> "I was camped at Bickerton Island when Dagiar and Wondercul (Mundugrul, now an old man at Yirrkalla) came in. I asked them what they had been doing, and Dagiar replied that the policemen had chased his mob. Four policemen had come to Woodah where they sat down. Dagiar had called out, but no one answered him. Then he had come closer and one boy (a tracker) had seen him and given the alarm. They chased him, and he went into the jungle. He saw another man go past him, and moved further away. Then he heard a woman calling out, and with 'stick talk' she indicated that she would bring up one white man. When she came near, Dagiar got his spear ready, and talking by 'finger talk' with the woman told her to move to one side. The policeman got up, and Dagiar threw his spear. With the spear protruding from him McColl drew his revolver and fired three shots, but Dagiar ran into the jungle. On the way to Darwin in the boat Dagiar had said, 'All my own fault, because I killed a policeman. I go to Darwin'".

Mr Fitzgerald obtained an adjournment to go through Barani's evidence. Returning to Court he said that he had a matter he

would like to discuss with the Judge and Dr Cook, at that time Chief Protector of Aborigines for the Northern Territory. The jury was excluded, and the Judge, Fitzgerald and Cook went into the Judge's Chambers.

When they returned, Harris told the Judge the lubras had not been called because he had received instructions that Aborigines' wives were in the same position as white men's wives, and he had not been permitted to get them. The Judge commented very strongly on this, pointing out that the Court ruling, in which he concurred, was that lubras were competent and compellable to give evidence in the circumstances stated, and it was very wrong for the Crown to withhold that evidence. Harris explained too that he had learnt since the morning that the trackers referred to had not waited with McColl, but had chased other Aborigines. Their evidence, he contended, would not have been of any value. With regard to Morey, it was considered that Hall could give exactly the same evidence and therefore it was not necessary to recall Morey from Lake Nash, where he was stationed.

Harry from Milingimbi then described a conversation he had had with the accused, in which he confessed. This evidence differed from what Dagiari had told Barani.

The jury accepted the evidence of Hall and Paddy as being in keeping with the statement the accused had made to Barani. They therefore returned a verdict of guilty of murder.

At the conclusion of the case, Fitzgerald said that the admission the accused had made to Barani was the true one. He felt it his duty to make this statement to clear the dead man's name of any taint that might have been caused by Harry's story. (This however was not published, nor apparently accepted as evidence.) The following morning Dagiari was brought up for sentence before Judge Wells.

"His Honour said to Mr Fitzgerald in regard to a statement made to him and Dr Cook by Dagiari, if his client had been a white man it would have been his duty to return his brief, but being an Aborigine he did what was best. Mr Fitzgerald had informed the Court at the earliest opportunity, otherwise it would have given ignorant, malicious, and irresponsible persons in other parts of Australia an opportunity to malign a dead man. Mr

Fitzgerald had made the statement publicly and placed the true position before the Court".

Certain other remarks were made at this time. For example, it was suggested that Dagiari was acting on behalf of some organization. Judge Wells countered that the tribe as a whole was a kindly people, that included some "hot heads". He did not consider they were "Stone Age" savages. The matter of interference with the prisoner's wife (revealed in Harry's evidence) did not, he said, enter into the matter. 'All evidence he had was against the argument that a native killed for interference with his wife'. Dr Cook said he did not know even now why the prisoner had killed McColl. Judge Wells replied that he had very strong reasons to suspect (to put it mildly) that the prisoner had been mixed up in other murders.

Wells said too that he did not know how the prisoner had been induced to come to Darwin, and "it would be interesting to know the true facts". Fitzgerald suggested that there was fear, the blacks having been pursued by armed men. Wells replied that Fitzgerald would have the greatest difficulty in persuading him that fear of the police actuated the deed, and he suggested that perhaps it was cunning that led Dagiari to murder. In reply to further argument by Counsel for the prisoner, the Judge said that the authorities had passed unending legislation without consulting him, but they threw the responsibility on to him, and he had to decide on the information placed before him. That the authorities did not act on his findings did not worry him at all. If it were desired to abolish the death penalty, this should be done by legislation and not by back door methods. Fitzgerald argued that the prisoner's wife had been handcuffed, and the inference to be drawn was that she was then taken away. The Judge retorted that he did not intend to draw any such inference.

Fitzgerald sought leniency for the prisoner, but the Judge said that this did not apply in a case of murder; and in further argument he said he had grave doubts as to whether the prisoner had, unassisted, concocted the story told to Harry. If he did, he was a very cunning man. When Fitzgerald asked that the sentencing

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of the prisoner should be delayed, to obtain evidence as to reasons for the killing, the Judge emphatically refused.

The Rev. Dyer said that Barani, before all the blacks of the adjacent islands, had told a story vastly different to the one he told in Court during the trial. The Judge replied that all the facts fitted into the story told by Barani. Dyer acknowledged responsibility for bringing Dagiār to Darwin, and admitted he had been placed in a false position and had not foreseen to what it would lead. The Judge pointed out that the blame for bringing in Dagiār lay with Rev. Dyer, upon whom the responsibility rested for not bringing in all the necessary witnesses. Dyer then made rather an interesting observation. He "contended that for nearly sixteen years the Arnhem Land Aborigines had been neglected. He was told the natives had twenty-eight kills to their credit. If he were dictator he would drive all the abos. into Liberty Square and give them all a good flogging. Mirera (Merara), who had been acquitted, was as big as scoundrel as any of them, and he would be amongst those flogged. Then he would let them see a bayonet charge and have the soldiers up to show them a volley and then tell them if there was any more killing they would all be shot down on the beach. He was not speaking as a missionary or a protector but as dictator. He knew his mission friends would not agree with his utterances".<sup>9</sup>

Judge Wells observed that some missionaries had declined to join the peace party. The people in the north, he continued, would understand Mr Dyer's attitude, but he did not know about the people down south. If Mr Dyer didn't take any more notice of what they said than he (Wells) did, he (Dyer) would be all right. Finally, the Judge commented that the prisoner had killed in a cunning way. He did not agree that all the Aborigines, as a whole, were murderers: the position was that many were quite well disposed if properly treated. Among them were individuals who were truculent, treacherous and criminally minded. He thought it necessary to show both to vicious minded Aborigines and also the well-disposed that they could not murder a policeman and get away with a few years; and he said that he could find no reason for doing other than passing sentence of death. These proceedings reveal something of the state of affairs at

that time, including the attitude of some people towards Aborigines in Arnhem Land. As an example of bias and misrepresentation, with blatant suppression of relevant evidence, and the Court's failure to call certain key witnesses, as well as the fact that no evidence was taken from Dagiar himself, the trial is outstanding. The main object, it seems, was to cover up the activities of McColl and the police party on Woodah Island, and to obtain a death sentence in order to let other Aborigines know that (in the words of the Judge) "they cannot murder a policeman and get away with a few years" of imprisonment.

Readers interested in native evidence and justice in North Australia should see Professor A. P. Elkin's valuable article in the journal *Oceania*.<sup>9a</sup> This writer quotes the trial of Dagiar as "one of the best examples of the operation of the 'fear' or 'worry' factor, and of the difficulty of ensuring an objective trial". Professor Elkin is referring here to "the factor of being frightened, worried and uneasy about police and Court procedures, and the consequences to themselves or their dependants, which is likely to operate always unless the natives are very sophisticated".

Further features of the trial were brought out in another Darwin newspaper.<sup>10</sup>

The police tracker Paddy stated that three of the women captured by the police belonged to Dagiar, but otherwise gave no evidence that connected Dagiar or any other Aborigine with the death of McColl. Barani could not understand even 'pidgin' English, and gave evidence through Paddy, the previous witness for the prosecution. The absence of the lubras, it was said, served only to emphasize the negligence of the Crown.

Harry, from Milingimbi, spoke fairly good English, and before he gave evidence the Judge tried hard to intimidate him. Dagiar, said Harry, told him on the lugger coming to Darwin that he had seen McColl misbehaving himself with one of his (Dagiar's) lubras. When he asked the lubra by "finger talk" for tobacco McColl saw him and fired several shots at him, so in return he threw a spear. Later Dagiar saw another white man and hid in the grass. The white man saw him and fired at him; he threw a spear, which went through the white man's hat. (This particular statement corroborated Hall's evidence.) At this stage Fitzgerald,

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Counsel for the Defence, asked for an adjournment. Judge Wells was reluctant, but Fitzgerald stated that the matter was a very urgent one, he had never before in his life been in such a predicament. As already mentioned, then, an adjournment was granted.

When the Court resumed the Judge sharply criticised the actions of the Administration, Police and Crown Law Officer. "Witnesses have been deliberately withheld", he observed when the Crown Prosecutor started to apologise. The Crown Prosecutor then asked for an adjournment to consult with the Administrator. This was granted. He then conferred with the Inspector of Police and the Administrator and possibly also with Counsel for the Defence. The Court resumed once more, and Fitzgerald continued his examination of Harry. But now, far from attempting to elicit facts favourable to his client, he tried (without doing so too openly) to discredit the witness who told a story more or less in his favour.

When this examination was finished, the Judge learned from Harry that he had told his story to the police over four months ago. He exclaimed that since the nature of Harry's evidence, casting a stigma upon a dead man, was known four months ago, it was astounding that the Administration had not obtained either of the trackers who were at the camp when McColl was speared, or the lubras, who on the Crown's admission could have been obtained, in order to clear McColl's name. And why was a half-caste boy from Groote, who had originally served as an interpreter for the police when questioning Barani, not produced? "It was the first time in his over twenty years' connection with the Court that he (i.e., the Judge) had seen such a case. If, owing to the negligence of the Crown, the jury brought in a verdict of not guilty, Dagiari would be let go and could not be tried again for the murder, resulting in possibly a grave miscarriage of justice and a stigma on the dead man's name".

Hall was called to testify to McColl's character and morals, and this concluded the evidence on the case. Commenting, the *Darwin Proletarian* mentions that Fitzgerald put up a very poor fight for his client, and seemed far more concerned about the "honour" of McColl than the safety of his client's neck. Towards

the conclusion of his address he said that nobody could convict anyone on the evidence, "not even a blackfellow", and the Judge enquired "why a blackfellow?" Later on Fitzgerald said that "Paddy was undoubtedly the best witness in the case". But since Paddy was not nearly as intelligible as Harry, and gave evidence that Dagiар confessed to cold-blooded murder of McColl, it is difficult to decide how a Counsel for the Defence could come to that conclusion.

The Judge commenced his summing up with these words: "It may be, owing to negligence, or incompetence, or worse, of the Crown, that a serious miscarriage of justice may take place, or a stigma be affixed to the name of a dead man". Then he delivered, according to this newspaper, "what must be one of the most biased, one-eyed, prejudiced summings-up ever heard in a Court of Law. By over-emphasising details which might indicate guilt, by minimising or completely ignoring facts which should give rise to a doubt in the minds of all men, by every artifice of suggestion known to lawyers, he endeavoured to thrust into the minds of the jurymen a conviction of guilt. Although his summing up lacked any brilliancy, at its conclusion the jurymen were so much under his influence that the verdict was practically a foregone conclusion". The jury, bringing in a verdict of guilty, added that they were absolutely disgusted with the way in which the Crown had conducted itself in connection with the case. The Judge stated that he regarded it as a very serious matter, one that should be inquired into, and had thought of putting the facts before the Attorney General.

The *Proletarian* devoted some space to an examination of Dagiар's trial. It pointed out that there were twelve known people in the vicinity of the tragedy. One was dead and only two gave evidence; why were none of the nine produced? McColl was left in the camp with two trackers and four lubras, and not one of these six persons was brought forward. The whole of the evidence revealed that the Crown did not want to produce these witnesses. Another matter not taken up by the Defence was the fact that McColl was killed about a quarter of a mile from the "dinner camp", on the edge of the jungle. What was he doing so far from the camp without a tracker with him?

Was it likely that a heavy calibre revolver could have been fired a quarter of a mile from the camp without the Aboriginal trackers being aware of it? Everything went to show that the lubras and trackers knew something that the police did not want known: and that the police deliberately kept them away because they realised that if these people came into Court the things they wanted to conceal would come to light.

The paper continues: "Anyone who was at the trial from start to finish can come to only one conclusion, and that is that McColl was killed by someone unknown. In fact, he might not have been even speared for, according to Hall's evidence, all that was produced at the inquest was a skull and a lot of bones which had been chewed about by dogs. That in itself is a suspicious circumstance. The Aborigines out bush manage to bury their dead deep enough to be out of the way of wild dogs and it seems unreasonable to suppose that the police would not bury their mate as deep, unless there was a very good reason for it".

The following evidence was put forward in an attempt to establish Dagiар's guilt. First, a statement he had allegedly made to Barani twelve months before, saying that he had speared McColl. This was not corroborated, and there was no certainty that the interpreter had repeated the same tale that Barani told him. Second, Dagiар's alleged statement to Harry, which differed considerably from that made to Barani: this too was uncorroborated, but the police were said to have known about it months before the trial. If they considered it false they should have got one at least of the six people who were in the camp with McColl to refute it. The only conclusion was that the police were afraid that any of these witnesses could only corroborate, in some degree, Harry's story. Either one or both of the stories must have been fabrications; and there was no evidence, except in each case an unsupported statement by one person, to prove that Dagiар really told either of them, or that, if he did, either of them was true. As this paper remarks, neither the lawyers nor the Judge pointed this out to the jury, and it was not credible that, if they had realised it, they could have brought in a verdict of guilty. Dagiар was thus convicted, not merely on circumstantial evidence, but on no evidence at all.

The *Proletarian* protests: "Dagiar (Tuckiar) may or may not have killed McColl, he may or may not have had provocation for killing him. That has yet to be proved, notwithstanding the verdict of the jury, and I venture to say that such a storm will be raised over the trial of Dagiar as may yet rock the Administration to its foundations, shake Judge Wells from his seat, result in a review of all the cases tried by this enemy of the Aborigines and justice, and result in radically different treatment for the Aborigines in the future. Already the wires are humming a cry that will soon be nation-wide. Save Dagiar". Dagiar was sentenced to death that morning, and the sentence was not translated to him.

On 14 August 1934, J. A. S. Housden wrote to Perriman at Groote Eylandt<sup>11</sup> that 'an appeal would probably be made to the High Court through the Aborigines' Department. If the appeal succeeded, a new trial would be ordered. Perriman, said the letter, "might prepare Harold (the half-caste interpreter mentioned at the previous trial) for it and inspire him with confidence, besides warning him of the necessity of speaking the truth under all circumstances without fear".

What were the true facts of the case, as far as we can determine?

Dyer wrote in April 1934<sup>12</sup> that the doubtful part about McColl was not mentioned, and "all reports of him as a man in here (that is, at Darwin) are very good; so we left it out in the copy. If it comes out in Court it must be faced, but they have only Dagiar's word as there are no other witnesses in here".

Dagiar's story, as told through Harry of Milingimbi, was as follows: ". . . one policeman was left with a young lubra, one of his (Dagiar's) wives. He came to look for her at the camp, but found it empty, then heard his wife calling out for help and went in search of her. He looked from behind a tree and saw the policeman and his wife. The policeman fired three shots at him; and when he paused to attend to his gun Dagiar threw his spear, killing him. (Actually, McColl was not killed immediately. He managed to pull the spear out of his chest and walk a little way, and then fell down.) Dagiar and his wife ran away. As they ran they saw another policeman, who fired at them, and Dagiar



Plate 10: Drawing: *A Macassan trepang site on the Australian mainland.*



Plate II: Bulaninda at Yirrkalla; daughter of Dagiar (Tuckiar).

threw a spear at him, hitting his hat. Dagiар moved away. The policeman fired again at him, and they ran further away. Dagiар was with his son Ulambu, and his brother Mulumi.'

On 4 August 1934 Dyer wrote to Judge Wells: "Barani's story was collected here by the Crown in Darwin. I could bring evidence into this Court collected by three white men who wrote it down near the spot in their books on the first of March on Woodah Island. Barani was then present, with all the elders of his tribe, as well as others of the Walku tribe of Groote Eylandt. Harold Hamilton, Sam and Bill (two boys sent up by the police) were also there — about twenty-five persons in all. This story is not the same as the one told to you in Court. We collected three stories at three different times and places". Dyer then gave the version set out above.

After fourteen years the Aborigines of north-eastern Arnhem Land still remembered details of this incident. Natives who were present on Woodah Island at the time of McColl's death tell the following story, which has been considerably condensed here. It agrees in most respects with Dyer's statement.

'... The police rounded up a large group of women, while their men were over at Groote selling tortoise-shell to the Mission. These white men camped with the women. When the men returned from Groote they met the police, who ran after them into the scrub, firing every way but hitting no one. One policeman took Dagiар's young wife from the group of women and went some distance away and began to copulate with her. Dagiар heard her cry out and went to see what was the matter. He looked from behind a tree into the bushes and saw them together. At the same time the policeman saw him and got up, firing. He came out from the bushes into the clearing and Dagiар speared him. Then Dagiар ran away with his wife, but another policeman saw them and shot at him, so he threw another spear, hitting the man's hat. Then he ran away ...'

This rather lengthy discussion of Dagiар's trial needs little further comment. As a result of this case various organisations began a campaign to obtain Dagiар's release, or re-trial. The *Northern Standard* of 12 October 1934, for example, had a column entitled, "All After Judge Wells!" The Association for

the Protection of Native Races also launched a campaign. The International Labour Defence committee demanded the release of the murderers (that is, Dagiар and those brought in for the Caledon Bay massacre), the recall of Judge Wells, proclamation of native Reserves and the holding of future trials on the scenes of alleged crimes. This was given prominence in the *Sydney Morning Herald*. But Canberra reported that "it is considered probable that the Executive will commute the death sentence on Constable McColl's murderer after a consideration of papers in the case".

Dagiар's sentence was, eventually, commuted. Later he "escaped" from Fanny Bay gaol and "disappeared" into the bush, apparently trying to get back to his own country. He never reached it, and the eastern Arnhem Landers believe that he either perished on the way to the Roper River, or is still living within another tribe.<sup>13</sup> A few of them even declare that the Darwin police were responsible for his death and spread rumours of his escape to conceal their guilt. Those of Dagiар's wives who are still living have all married other men. Judge Wells was not recalled, and long maintained his seat on the Bench. Special native law courts, to be held where possible at the scene of an alleged crime, are only just being instituted now. Important results, however, were the sending out of a pacification expedition under Dr. Donald Thomson<sup>14</sup> (inspired also by the Caledon Bay murders) and an awakening of public interest in the Aborigines generally.

## CHAPTER 15

### THE JAPANESE MURDERS

The coming of the Japanese pearlers and trepangers to the northern coast of Arnhem Land, in the first quarter of this century, brought another form of alien contact that the Aborigines found distasteful.

At first, apparently, the Arnhem Landers were prepared to welcome the Japanese as successors of their Indonesian friends of the past. But when they found that the newcomers preferred to work almost independently, making very little use of Aboriginal labour, they soon changed their opinion. When the Japanese did trade, the natives were far from satisfied with the payment they received for their goods.

We have already seen something of the results of Japanese contact in both western and eastern Arnhem Land. The Aborigines' chief grievance seems to have been that the Japanese interfered with their women. In western Arnhem Land around the Liverpool and King rivers they seem to have sanctioned this prostitution to some extent, partly because local morality had been weakened by earlier association with Europeans. But further east, where sexual relations had through the centuries of contact with Indonesians been more or less controlled, and where European infiltration was confined to spasmodic visits by trepangers, pearlers and beachcombers, circumstances were rather different. The eastern people had been in the habit of defending themselves against what they considered injustices. When the Japanese infringed their tribal customs, withheld trade goods, or procured women without the sanction of their husbands or guardians, they were ready to respond with spears.

We shall deal here with several spearings in which Japanese were killed or wounded. In this Chapter we shall take our information from Aboriginal sources, following this later on by discussing, from European sources alone, one of the most spectacular murder cases of the Arnhem Land coast.

Let us begin by describing a recent dream of a Yirrkalla native named Munggeraui, a middle-aged man who had worked for the Japanese. This shows a fairly typical example of mutual misunderstanding between people of two different cultural groups, and the results that followed. Munggeraui was apparently still brooding on the more unpleasant features of Japanese contact, and had recurrent dreams on the same theme. Probably, too, this was accentuated during the period of Air Force contact, when he was employed at the Yirrkalla base, and when the Japanese bombed Milngimbi Mission station.

' . . . From the beach I saw three Japanese luggers passing down the Cape Wilberforce passage (Malay Road). So I and my companions Djargudjargu, Djuwalji, Bununggu, Djalwar, Jama and Gwodei, got a canoe and paddled out to meet them. When the Japanese saw us they climbed the rigging. I waved my hand, and the boats slowed down, then stopped. When we were near them I tried to speak to some of the crew of the first boat, but they didn't understand me. Then I tried some of the crew on the second boat, but still I couldn't make them understand. At last a Japanese in the third boat understood me. He turned and explained to the others that we had pearl-shell in our canoe and were ready to sell it. They seemed very pleased.

'Then the captain of the three luggers told his crew to wait, and he would go below to get tobacco and "buy" the pearl-shell. But while he was below some of the crew took the pearl-shell from Gwodei without "paying" him. Then the captain came back and offered us some loose tobacco, but this tobacco was "just like seaweed", and not what we wanted. Gwodei began to ask for tobacco in return for the pearl-shell that they had taken. But the Japanese didn't understand, and the two men began to wrestle together.

'I told them to stop. "You'd better stop fighting. Maybe they will kill you". But they wouldn't listen, and kept on fighting.

The other Japanese saw what was happening. They got their guns and began to fire. Gwodei jumped into the canoe and we paddled away, but the firing followed us. The captain called out to the others, "Put your guns down, don't fire on the canoe". But all the crew went to the front of the luggers and kept on firing at us. Then they started their engines and raced away down the Wilberforce passage. . . ."

The second example relates an actual incident, from the case history of Buramara, an Elcho Island man.

"We went up to the Wessel Islands, where we were making a canoe, and while we were there a Japanese lugger called in. We held a big ceremony there, because we had got things from the Japanese. While we were dancing some of the Japanese came ashore and asked Paddy Ngimbit, my elder "brother", if he would get them some women. Paddy told them there were a lot of women there. "Yes", he said, "I'll even let you have one of my own wives". He asked them to wait while he went back to the main camp to get them.

'Instead, when he went back, Paddy got together some of the native men. They picked up their spears and returned to where the Japanese were waiting. Then they ran bounding towards them, crying out "wah! wah! wah!" throwing spears as they came.

"The Japanese rushed away to their dinghy, and rowed back to their boat. We didn't kill anyone, only frightened them. Then the Japanese captain came ashore himself and stood in front of us, very quietly. We were just going to kill him when my father stopped us. He grabbed hold of the captain's arm, and told my people to stop throwing spears. The rest of the crew had gone back to their boat, some in the dinghy and some swimming. Paddy turned and called to them to wait for their captain. One of the Wessel Island men swam out and tried to pull back the dinghy. He talked to the Japanese in Macassan, but they didn't understand, and one of them hit him with a paddle. But at last the dinghy returned to the shore, and my father took the captain and put him in it. The captain gave my father a lot of tinned tobacco. Then the boat sailed away. . . .'

Not all such incidents, however, had a happy ending. On the eastern coast, near Trial Bay, several Japanese were murdered before the notorious and much publicised Caledon Bay "massacre" of 1932.

A Japanese lugger had anchored off the shore, and three canoes full of natives, including Wonggu and three of his sons, Djirin, Mama and Neidjalma, came out to sell fish. They boarded the boat and sold their fish, received their tobacco and paddled back to the shore. Later on they came back with more fish to sell, and this time they took their spears. They boarded the lugger again and sold their fish, but this time they were in no hurry to leave. The Japanese, seeing that a storm was brewing, were anxious to sail away to a sheltered cove nearby, so they began to tell them to go.

The Aborigines didn't like being told this, especially as the Japanese spoke roughly and threatened them with their rifles. "Go back to the shore", they kept saying, "or we'll knock you down". One man pointed his rifle at Djirin. But Djirin leaped up from the place where he had been smoking and seized him by the shoulders and throat; then, swinging him around, he cut his throat.

When the other Japanese saw what was happening they jumped into the sea and began to swim, but the Aborigines swam after them and killed them one by one with their turtle spears. One climbed the mast in a futile attempt to escape, and he was speared too. Then the boat was looted and allowed to drift. Eventually it was taken over by the Groote Eylandt missionaries.

Apparently it had drifted as far as Bickerton Island, for we read in the Groote Eylandt Mission Records<sup>1</sup> that the "Holly" returned to the station on 25 May 1928 with the ketch "Kushimoto", which had been lying at Bickerton for about two months. It was stripped of nearly everything that the natives considered useful, and the missionaries could not learn anything of importance concerning it. In the following month, the "Oituli" came back from a trip to Woodah Island, Nicol Island, Burney Island and Bennett Bay, but it was only at Bennett Bay that any natives had been seen. The "Oituli" reported that the crew of the

"Kushimoto" had been killed on the lugger while asleep, but this does not conform with the account given today by the Aborigines themselves.

There were a number of similar murders in this locality at about the same time. One Japanese captain managed to escape to Milngimbi, but the majority of them were killed.

In December 1926,<sup>2</sup> Groote Eylandt Mission station received word that a Japanese named Asari and an Aboriginal named Trimbrik had been murdered. Their vessel, the "Onyx", had been plundered and was found lying on the beach near Connexion Island, close to Groote. At the end of that month the Mission boat "Holly" left for Trial Bay to investigate the murder, taking Mounted-Constable Heathcock and two police "boys", Paddy Stott and Dick. Bill Harney had called at the Groote Eylandt Mission to say that he and his mate had brought the "Iolanthe" (their own boat) and the "Onyx" into the Mission river. He reported that a Cape Shield man had been found dead on the boat, and that May, a native woman aboard Asari's boat, had been taken by Cape Shield natives. Later Bill Harney wrote to the Mission that Asari had been murdered by Aborigines from Cape Shield.

This series of killings culminated in the Caledon Bay massacre, on 17 September 1932.

On 6 October 1932 four Aborigines were charged in the Darwin police court with the murder of Japanese from the lugger "Ouida" in 1931. Other Aborigines gave evidence saying that they had witnessed the murder, and that the men had decided to kill the Japanese for their food, tobacco and fire-arms. The Japanese, after beaching their lugger, had taken five native women from the camp and kept them on board for two days. One day the natives had gone duck shooting with the Japanese on a billabong. On the way back they had knocked the Japanese down with sticks, taken their guns and shot them. They had covered their bodies with leaves and grass, returned to loot the lugger, and finally "gone bush".<sup>3</sup>

Even after the Caledon Bay murders, the Groote Eylandt Mission records mention<sup>4</sup> a report from Bickerton Island natives that the mainland "Balamumus" had raided four Japanese luggers

and killed the crew; but there may be some confusion here with the Caledon Bay incident.

The Aborigines of eastern Arnhem Land, and especially the men who took part in it, have vivid memories of the Caledon Bay massacre.

At Caledon Bay, they say, the Japanese had asked repeatedly for native women; but those who came down to the luggers received only trifling gifts in return for their favours. The local Aborigines included men who had participated in other massacres of Japanese, and they outwardly showed their dislike for the pearlers.

First of all, here is a summary of the incident.

One day, during a quarrel, a Japanese threw some *biabia* (refuse from the trepang) at a native. Later one of them threatened to shoot some Aborigines who had come into the Japanese camp, and another fired his rifle at a native, but missed. Finally the Japanese gave a "hiding" to some of the working natives. By this time the Aborigines were thoroughly roused, and ready for trouble. Munggerau's father had been threatened by the Japanese too, and it is said that he ordered the massacre.

'One morning before breakfast,' relates Naradjin, 'the Japanese were working as usual. One group of natives, the working boys, pretended to help the Japanese, while another lot crept stealthily up with their spears.'

'Mauwunboi sprang forward and grabbed one Japanese, then let him go while another Aborigine speared him from behind. One Japanese had a double-barrelled shot gun, and others had revolvers and .303 rifles; but they had no chance to fire, we were too quick. One Japanese was speared in the trepang hut, and another by their dinghy. Another was speared as he swam away, and another at the Point near the Bay. There were others as well: the captain, Danaka; the cook, Kimasima; another captain named Tinda; and the engineer. But one of them, named Kindju, escaped, and went overland to Milingimbi with some native crew boys. Then Gwuramada (an Aborigine) collected all the guns, and hid them in the buhs nearby.'

Now let us quote from Naradjin's case history, which brings out certain details.

‘ . . . Munggeraui was working trepang with Fred Gray. I came to Wirwa billabong, near Cape Arnhem, with Bununggu and his father. Munggeraui and Fred Gray anchored at Cape Arnhem but didn’t see us; then they went on to Caledon Bay. We came by ourselves; we camped at Cape Arnhem that morning, collecting turtle eggs on the beach. In the afternoon, two Japanese luggers came and anchored there, to collect the trepang tanks they had left.

‘ Next morning, we went with the Japanese; there were five other Aborigines from our country on board. We were hoping to see Munggeraui down the coast. The Japanese gave us plenty of food and tobacco. At last we came to the south of Caledon Bay, where we anchored; Fred Gray’s camp was on the same side of the Bay. We were working there, and the Japanese became very “cheeky”; so Fred Gray moved his camp over to the other side.

‘ Then one day the Japanese threw trepang refuse at Munggeraui’s father. He was very angry, and ordered all the people to come together to punish the Japanese for what they had done to him. He said to us, “We’ll go and murder them straight away.” All the people agreed, because he was a headman. They sent word to the others, and Neidjalma came up from his camp on the other side of Gray’s place. Then the Japanese threatened us and fired some shots, and we came in and killed them. After we had looted the stores from the Japanese boats we returned to Trial Bay, but later went on to Blue Mud Bay . . . ’

Here is an extract from the case history of a young man named Djinini.

‘ . . . Fred Gray’s boat came to Caledon Bay, and anchored there; Munggeraui was on board with his people. I was only small then, perhaps about six years old. Bill Harney’s boat came along, and later the Japanese boats. They were working there for about two months, at Wopalma, inside Port Bradshaw. The Japanese and Harney’s boats were there, and later Harney went on to Groote Eylandt. The two Japanese boats, one a sailing ship and the other with an engine, were going on to Groote

afterwards to meet Gray. They were getting trepang around Caledon Bay for some time. Fred Gray was camped on one side, near Trial Bay.

'I was too small to work, but we got food from the Japanese. We used to sell fish to them. But the Japanese got wild with us for hanging around their camp. They interfered with our women; and then one threw trepang refuse at Munggeraui's father, and another fired his rifle at us.'

'The Japanese had brought some other natives with them. There were George and his companion from Melville Island; Erangu, a Jiwadja native from the Cobourg Peninsula; Erindali (Jirindili), Bareidjalg and Warindja, Maung men from Goulburn Islands; Ringgidj, Naminjaragu, Jalbar, Murlgu and another of the Mabana tribe from another Blue Mud Bay, in the west of Arnhem Land.'

'Some of our people from Caledon Bay, Port Bradshaw and the English Company Islands were also working for the Japanese. And under the direction of Munggeraui's father, all the Aborigines came down and killed the Japanese.'

'Fred Gray just sat down in his camp. "What's happening?" he asked. He came over in a dinghy to where we were, with Djirin and Munggeraui. Gungoilmal got a shot gun, that had belonged to the Japanese, and "tried to shoot Mr. Gray". But the others stopped him.'

'Everybody went into the bush, after we had looted the camp and the ship. One Japanese escaped with three of the crew boys, and went overland to Milngimbi . . .'

Fred Gray, it is said, could see the whole incident from his camp. He got into his dinghy, and began to cross the Bay towards them, but several of the Aborigines fired Japanese guns to keep him away while they looted the boat.

However, he came over in the afternoon and gave the Aborigines tobacco so that they would not burn the Japanese boat; he wanted to take it to Darwin. He collected all the guns, and asked, "You got plenty of food and tobacco?" "Yes," everybody said, "You take what is left in the boat." Then he asked them, "Why didn't you shoot me?" And they replied, "The trouble was from the Japanese and not from you." Djirin,

Dangadji, Djuwalji, Munggeraui, Wulambi, Madaman, Monju and Charlie Marabula, together with other young boys from Cape Shield, were with Gray at that time. The Japanese were buried where they fell, and those killed in the water were left to float away.

Naradjin's case history continues. '... Fred Gray returned to Caledon Bay after a while. He came to our camp and said, "Don't be frightened. It was a good job you fellows killed the Japanese." He was working there, and gave us tobacco and flour. The Arnhem Bay mob came down, and we had a fight (continuing an inter-clan feud). After that we were working with Fred Gray at Cape Arnhem. Then he went away. We went on to Melville Bay, where Munggeraui's father died ... Later I went to Cape Arnhem and on to Yirrkalla, where I saw Fred Gray's boat again. I went on board with Djirin and the others, and we went down to Trial Bay. This was the time when Gray's boat was lost on a sandbank. He sent us with a message to the Groote Eylandt Mission. We came back in the Mission boat, picked up Gray and returned to Groote, with Djuwalji, Mauwunboi and me as crew.<sup>5</sup>

'Fred Gray came back in the lugger "Oituli", that he had got at Groote Eylandt. He picked up the "Neidjalma mob" and took them to Darwin'. (See next Chapter.)

When Fred Gray returned to collect these men from Caledon Bay, he is reputed to have said to them: "What about going to Darwin with me to clean up this trouble? We don't want any policeman here; we can easily clear this up." Mau, Nagaia and Neidjalma, all brothers, went as "prisoners", and Mauwunboi, Naradjin, Nanjin and Djuwalji as witnesses. Djeidja (Dagiar), Barani, "Basil" Galaguramin and Wolbadja were also on the boat. Djeidja (or Dagiar) and Barani were being taken in about the Woodah Island murders.

Djinini's case history details the events that led up to the departure of these men for Darwin.

'... It was after the Japanese murders at Caledon Bay. We were at Wirwa swamp, collecting lily roots, when we saw Gray's boat returning. It passed us, but we lit fires all along and attracted his attention. He turned his boat about, and everybody

said, "Ah, the boat's coming now"! When Gray saw us he asked Naradjin, Nanjin and Djirin, "You want to come with me?" They all said, "Yes". Gray anchored on the other side of what is now the Yirrkalla Mission point, because he wanted to take some other people, Mauwunboi and some others from Milingimbi. Then he went down the coast to Trial Bay, where his boat stuck on a sandbank. He met all the Caledon Bay mob here, and they helped him to unload all his goods and to dismantle as much of the boat as they could. All these things were stored on the beach. Then he sent Naradjin, Ganbaraidj and Mauwunboi to Groote Eylandt Mission, called Gadiba, with a message. They gave that message to Mr. Warren at the Mission, and he went on their lugger, the "Holly", to pick up Fred Gray and some of his stores. Then Gray got a cutter from the Mission . . . Afterwards he came back to Trial Bay. . . .<sup>6</sup> He anchored there, and the people called out, "*Bunggauwa* ("boss") coming!" Fred Gray was with Mr. Dyer, a missionary from Groote, and with his crew boys he loaded his boat with the goods piled up on the shore. Then he talked to the Caledon Bay people: "You boys want to go down to Darwin?" They all replied, "Yes". Then Mau, Nagaia, Neidjalma, Mauwunboi, Naradjin, Nanjin, Djuwalji, and two other men now dead, got on to the boat; and there were Djeidja (Dagiar), Barani, Wolbadja, and Galaguramin. After supper we weighed anchor and left the bay, and did not stop at any place except Milingimbi until we reached Darwin. When we got there every man went to gaol, to Fanny Bay. That Fred Gray was "young" then, and he played a trick on us, because we thought we were just going in to act as "witnesses". But Fred Gray himself was a "witness", and the lawyer said we had to stay in Darwin. Later on Naradjin and Mauwunboi went back with Gray. Three men came back when the Yirrkalla Mission Station was started, and some others sat down in the Compound for a while and returned afterwards. . . .

This, then, is the story of the Japanese killings at Caledon Bay, from the viewpoint of the participants. In the following Chapter we shall review the same case from the European standpoint, that is, from evidence given at the trial of these Aborigines. It is apparent that the motives here were similar

to those involved in the killing of Europeans and Macassans. The natives of north-eastern Arnhem Land (for all our examples here are from that region, although there was dissension in the western part too at this time) were quick to hit back and defend their rights. They did not kill for the love of killing. As a rule they killed only on provocation. Greed for goods was an important factor; but this was an element which, as we have seen, had been accentuated by the economic disturbances arising from alien contact.

## CHAPTER 16

### THE CALEDON BAY KILLINGS

Reports of the Caledon Bay massacre<sup>1</sup> were made available to the public from evidence obtained at the trial of the Aborigines who had been brought to Darwin. It is interesting to compare these accounts with the versions given by Aboriginal participants approximately seventeen years later.

Before passing to a summary of the trial, here are some extracts condensed from the trepanger Fred Gray's journal,<sup>2</sup> which relates some of his experiences while bringing in the Aborigines implicated in the Caledon Bay affair, exactly one year and seven months after it had taken place. Three men were charged before the Darwin court on 25 May 1934, and sentenced on 30 June of the same year.

' . . . Tarkeara (Dagiar) and Meerara (Mirera), the two blacks concerned in killing Fagan and Traynor, and McColl, are on the cutter, and want to go to Darwin as passengers, and then to give themselves up to the authorities; but at the last moment Dagiar gets nervous and walks off. Mr Dyer, who is also going with me to Darwin as a passenger, had a talk with him and tries to persuade him that it is far better to go into Darwin voluntarily than to cause more trouble; but Dagiar is too nervous, and speaks of his wife and child. The parting is too great for him. Mirera is not in the least nervous, for he seems brimful of life and could be a dangerous man . . . but is just a happy child when all is well with him. . . . He (Mirera) has disappeared, also two Groote Eylandt boys who were coming to Darwin to interpret for him, so now I have neither of the wanted men on board, and it looks as though I shall only be able

to take the Caledon boys in; they are waiting for me at Trial Bay, and are most anxious to go to Darwin to make themselves clear, as they put it . . . (The four Groote Eylandt men) have gone to the north of Groote, and Mirera swam ashore with a bag of flour when he left the cutter. (They found later that Dagiар was at the north of Groote Eylandt and Mirera on Bickerton Island.)

' . . . We made our way to the north of Groote (and contacted a number of natives). Mr Dyer came on board and said that Dagiар was quite willing to come with us now that he had seen his wives and piccaninny, and that he would come on board tomorrow morning. (Next morning) Dyer goes ashore and . . . (later) comes aboard with Dagiар. Up anchor and away to Bickerton Island, and Mr Dyer goes ashore in heavy rain and has a talk with the natives. They tell him that Mirera is further round the bay. . . . Two of our crew go ashore but Mirera has changed his mind. "No more", he tells me, "Darwin long way". I talk and plead with him for about an hour but still he refuses to consent to come. At last I tell him I am going back to my boat and will not come again. "All right", he says, jumping up. "I'll come".

' . . . Reached Trial Bay . . . reached St. David's Bay, the site of the new Church of England mission. . . .<sup>3</sup> The Caledons are supposed to be waiting here for me ready for their trip to Darwin . . . but there is no sign of fires on the beach. . . . I inspect the new Church and house, which the peace expedition built . . . the blacks I have with me see the tracks of Wright, the white member of the crew of my wrecked boat,<sup>4</sup> also they find tracks of the two half-caste boys who went with him to try and walk overland to Milingimbi twenty days ago. I am very worried now and search round for further tracks of them, finding a native house where they had camped with Wonggu's<sup>5</sup> tribe, but no sign of a message. . . . Wake up and find that Mirera and Dagiар have disappeared overboard during the night; no sign of them, and no sign of the Caledons or Wright and the half-castes. . . . Just decide to send two parties off to search for them . . . when Bapanne (Babani), a young black boy who started overland with Wright, comes rushing along and bursts

into tears. He is carrying Wright's rifle and tells us he is just behind . . . several of the Caledons then make a great demonstration of affection. Ron and Gordon, the two half-castes, now come and we see Wright. . . . During their stay with Wonggu the Caledons had looked after them as well as they could, bringing them food and generally looking after their comfort. Wright could not speak too highly of their conduct. Wonggu then arrived with Mirera and Dagiari. . . . I then sent the dinghy ashore for any boys who were desirous of going into Darwin. Most of the tribe came on board, also Mirera and Dagiari. The five principal boys were picked out who were concerned in the Japanese killings, and the remainder of Wonggu's tribe went ashore . . . reached Milingimbi . . . and on to Darwin.'

This, then, summarises Gray's account of the bringing in of the Caledon Bay natives implicated in the Japanese killings.

On 25 May of that year four Aborigines, handcuffed and chained together, were brought into the Darwin court before Mr Norman C. Bell, special magistrate. Neidjalma (spelt in the records "Watchelma"), Mau (spelt Mow) and Nagaia (spelt Naraya) were charged on remand with the murder of Tanaka (Danaka), a Japanese member of the crews of two trepang luggers "Myrtle Olga" and "Raff", belonging to Kepert's fleet, at Caledon Bay on 17 September, 1932.<sup>6</sup> Constable Koop prosecuted, and Mr Harry Partridge represented the Aborigines' Department. Koop asked for a remand until 1 June, saying he expected that by then the witnesses he was awaiting would be available. But Partridge said that the Chief Protector of Aborigines (Dr Cecil Cook) had instructed him to object to such a remand; the circumstances under which the men had been arrested left grave doubt as to their guilt. Koop observed that Kinjo (Kindju), the Japanese survivor and an eye-witness of the tragedy, had failed to identify the accused. The case, said the *Northern Standard*, "bristled with difficulties and complications"; and the police were anxious to resolve the conflicting stories, but could not do so until the other witnesses arrived. It was due to both the prosecution and the defence that everything possible should be brought into the open. Except for their

## THE CALEDON BAY KILLINGS

loss of liberty, the accused "were not subjected to anything detrimental to their comfort" (!) An adjournment was granted until 1 June.

The witnesses expected, continued the report, were most likely friendly Goulburn Island boys forming part of the crew of the two trepang luggers, and were probably being brought to Darwin in the Methodist Mission auxiliary ketch "Maree". These are the Goulburn Island natives mentioned in the previous Chapter as having walked from Caledon Bay to Milingimbi after the massacre. At the same time as the above three Aborigines were charged, Dagiari was also brought up for the murder of McColl.

On 30 May, Neidjalma, Mau and Nagaia were charged on remand with the wilful murder of Tanaka.<sup>7</sup> Only one witness was called, Harry from Milingimbi, who appears also in the trial of Dagiari. He told the following story.

" . . . I remember the "Oituli", mission boat coming along to Milingimbi with Fred Gray and Rev. Dyer aboard, also three natives (nodding towards the accused). I understand their language and can talk to them. They told me the Japanese came along and got some boys there to make a smoke house and camp along the beach. The Japanese told Nomina to get firewood for the boiler. (This man was Munggeraui's father, mentioned in the previous Chapter.) Nomina didn't understand English and the Japanese struck him. Nomina got the firewood but they hit him again. The Japanese threw the trepang guts at him, and rubbed this in his face. Nomina didn't retaliate. A toothless Japanese cook hit Nomina in the back with a stick. The Japanese assaulted other natives too, and gave hidings on different days to natives who couldn't understand them. Some boys came from Fred Gray's camp, and Neidjalma tried to break up some tobacco. A Japanese got a revolver and shot at him, but missed. Neidjalma was frightened and ran away, but later on this Japanese asked him to get trepang. He said, "All right, I work for you". He went paddling. The Japanese got the women to go and look for oysters. One man took a fish net and bag, and he walked behind, the women in front. The natives saw the Japanese put down the net and the bag, and sneak along the reef.

Then they saw one woman come out of the bush. They heard a shout and thought something had happened, so they went out along the beach. The Japanese got out a revolver when he saw Neidjalma, who said, "Trouble been happen. One Japanese got woman to do wrong (that is, copulate)".

'The Japanese came after Neidjalma and took more women, and locked them up in the smoke house. Neidjalma protested, telling the Japanese: "Suppose I steal anything from you you killem me. What you doing with women? That's not right." The Japanese fired six revolver shots at him, but missed again. He kept the women in his possession, and Neidjalma looked after his children. The natives discussed the matter. Some advised killing and cutting up the Japanese, others consulting Fred Gray or the Methodist missionaries at Goulburn Island. In the end they took up their spears and went down to the smoke house, where there were three old men. The Japanese tried to get their guns; but Neidjalma got one of them first time with his spear, Mau got the second, and Nagaia the third. One Japanese swam away and they couldn't get him.'

The case was then adjourned.

On 1 June Police Superintendent Stretton gave evidence concerning the arrest of the three men, and the subsequent attempt to get Kinjo to identify them as actors in the tragedy. He was unable to identify any of them. Out of the witnesses who visited Fanny Bay Gaol, only two identified one of the accused. The first said that he knew only one, and could not recognise the other two, because it was too long ago.

Woolaware, Neidjalma's brother (now dead), gave evidence through an interpreter. He remembered the Japanese being at Caledon Bay at the time of the tragedy, and he "savvied" Kimishima (Kimasima) the Japanese cook, Kinjo and Tanaka, and a diving tender whose name he could not remember. 'The Japanese were bad people. They had whipped him, Mau, old man "Nikolo" (probably Noming, Munggeraui's father), and others. The Japanese used to thrash Aborigines for nothing. The Aborigines worked for the Japanese, and went diving to get trepang. Four lubras went looking for oysters. The Japanese took a fish net and bag and went along the reef. Afterwards the

natives heard shots fired, and saw a woman running away; they got frightened, and went ashore to where the old men were. When they asked what was the matter, one old man said that the Japanese had got his wife. He wanted to know what to do; if they didn't kill the Japanese, they would be killed themselves. Three boys got spears, and went along to the Japanese camp to "make a noise". Neidjalma speared a Japanese diving tender on the back with a stone spear, Mau speared another, and Wuninga (possibly Nagaia) speared the Japanese cook.'

Nanjin (Naradjin's brother) gave evidence through Andrew, another interpreter, to much the same effect.

At this stage Police Prosecutor Koop stated that the evidence now being put forward was quite unlike what had been given to him previously. Magistrate Bell decided not to hear further evidence from the witness, who might possibly incriminate himself; and the court adjourned.

On the same day<sup>8</sup> evidence was given by Mauwunboi (spelt in the records Mowenbowie), and also by two Melville Island natives Billy Bungalorinja (Bungalorinjah) and George Nungjin (Noongi-i-in). The three Goulburn Island natives, Naminjaragu (Yarrungboo), Murlgu (Mooigoo) and Solomon also gave evidence. Bulnug (Bullnook) served as interpreter for these three, and Gander was used for the others. The Melville Island natives did not confirm the evidence given by the Caledon Bay men, saying that Japanese had "growled" at the Caledon Bay boys because they would not work. They did not agree that the Japanese had treated the others cruelly, or that they had had four lubras in the smoke house. Solomon, however, testified that the four Caledon Bay boys had been thrashed by the Japanese. The lubras, he said, were in the smoke house, and the door of this was locked on the outside.

Fred Gray was then called. He had known the accused, he said, since 1932, and saw them in September 1932 on a beach near the Japanese camp. There were six Japanese there. As a result of certain information, he went to the Japanese camp. When he approached he saw that the luggers were in the hands of the Aborigines, but he could not recognise them. Two were in a boat, and one was leaving in a boat. 'As we approached the

luggers two other dinghies left them in a hurry, loaded to the water's edge with stores and men. Near the shore, we were fired upon by an Aborigine named "Mickey", a Port Bradshaw boy. (In Chapter 15 we noted that Gungoilmá "tried to shoot Gray".) I signalled them to stop, but they continued; so I went on board the luggers and got two shot guns. When I was fired on, I thought it better to return and go down by shore. The natives returned to the luggers. I took both luggers to my camp; only a few stores were left in them. Afterwards I walked to the Caledon Bay camp, but there were no natives there. On the way I found Kimishima's (Kimasima's) body near the camp, with spear wounds in the neck and both arms. I found two more bodies near the smoke house. Inamori's body was nearest the smoke house; he was sometimes called cook. I found the body of Tanaka floating in the water. Then I buried the three in one grave. Everything in the camp had been cleared out. We searched round for some time, but found no traces of other members of the party; then we returned to camp.

'Next day I made a further search, and found the body of the engineer, Nigashi. I found tracks of Kinjo and a Melville Island boy going away from the camp. . . . In December, 1933, I saw the Caledon Bay tribe again in that vicinity. I met them in the bush, and they were quite friendly. They told me of their troubles with the Japanese, and how Inamori had interfered with their women. The Japanese were cheeky beggars. I said it would be best for them to go to Darwin, and if the police came for them not to run away. I was going though on the cutter, and would help them as much as I could. I made no promises to them before they told me their troubles. . . .'

The Magistrate found that a *prima facie* case had been made out, and committed the accused for trial.

On the 30 July<sup>9</sup> at the Darwin Supreme Court, before Judge Wells and jury, the same three men were charged with wilful murder of Tanaka. On the following day the jury found them guilty, and added a rider recommending them to mercy on account of their "being stone age savages, and provocation caused by the shooting". Wells asked W. J. P. Fitzgerald (for the three accused) whether he had any witnesses. Fitzgerald

consulted with the Rev. T. T. Webb (from Milingimbi Mission) and Rev. Dyer, but neither of them took the witness stand.

Gray said, in a statement: ' . . . The district in which they (the accused) live is out of touch with any civilising influence. There is no Mission near. Without crossing hostile country, there are no cattle stations or settlements. If they have a grievance or an injury done to them, they have no representative of the Government in whom they can confide their trouble. Their only link in the past few years with the outside world has been through casual trepangers, whose benefit to them is doubtful. I know personally that they took complaints to two white trepangers about the conduct of the Japanese in 1932; and for all the benefit it did them, they might as well have spoken to a tree. . . . (He described the time he had been wrecked on that coast, and how the natives had helped him then.)

' . . . These blacks are real Myalls, and have no idea of our laws; and to send them to prison, where they will mix with part-civilised blacks, will be to give them an education in cunning. Far better to send them back to their country and follow them with some representative of the Government, in some shape or form, so that in future, any policeman can go amongst them in comparative safety. . . . I would suggest that the interpreters in this case have not a complete knowledge of the Caledon Bay language; each of them belongs to some other tribe, well over 100 miles away. Moreover, I am confident from my knowledge of this tribe, and also from the nervous state of mind that the Japanese were in on the 16 September, that no women were even seen or molested on the 17th; and if there were any cause or provocation at all, it was some injury to men and not to women. I might mention too that Neidjalma, Mau, Nagaia and Nanjin did not at any time work for Japanese before the 17 September.'

Judge Wells declared that probably Kinjo was not as big a liar as the defence attorney suggested. He intended, he said, to dismiss the episode of the women in the smoke house, and agreed with Gray that the woman on the reef story was false. In justice to the Japanese, he had to say that they did not interfere with the women. And he did not believe the story of the shooting on the

17th. 'Probably there was some shooting, but he was satisfied it was only to frighten the natives.'

Fitzgerald replied that it was hard to say what was proved and what was not; the men had complained to Gray about shooting. The trial of these men here, he said, was like taking a white man to their own country, tying him to a tree, and trying him by tribal law at a corroboree. Neither party would understand what it was all about.

The Judge observed that the people killed were members of a friendly nation, and that if the world were to hear that he had let the prisoners go free, it might reasonably be the subject of a protest from their Government.

Fitzgerald answered that he did not suggest they should go free, but that sentence of death should not be passed. Wells returned that he had already made up his mind not to pass sentence of death, since there was just enough in the evidence to allow such a course.

Dr Cook stated the Japanese were unlawfully on the place where they were killed, being on an Aboriginal Reserve without a permit. The natives may perhaps have regarded the Japanese as invaders. But the Judge said there was no suggestion of invasion; had they met the Japanese on the shore with spears, it would have been different. Cook was opposed to a long gaol sentence, but Wells said he did not think he could consider a short term of imprisonment. It was a wholesale killing, he reminded them. One of the dominant factors was loot, because as soon as they killed the Japanese they proceeded to loot the vessels. The prisoners were apparently the "bad boys" of the tribe, and it would do the tribe good if they were removed. Dr Cook pointed out that it was not necessary for them to remain in gaol for the whole time to be kept way from the tribe. They could serve a salutary term of imprisonment, and after that be released and held by the Aborigines' Department, not necessarily in Darwin.

Judge Wells said that it was difficult to know what to do with these men. Perhaps the better and kinder way would be to hang them. He would sentence them, he thought, to a long term of imprisonment. Then when they had served a certain time, say

three or four years, when their country was peaceful and under control, and if the Gaoler's report were satisfactory, he would be prepared to recommend to the Executive Council that they be released after serving their full sentence. He sentenced them then to a term of twenty years' imprisonment with hard labour, under these conditions.

So concluded a farcical and tragic trial. No white man, in similar circumstances, would have been convicted on such evidence, with such misrepresentation of statements, and with such dictatorial and dogmatic judgment. As in the Fagan and Traynor and the McColl cases, Aboriginal evidence was virtually ignored, except where it coincided with official opinion; and bias and prejudice were the order of the day. Fitzgerald himself, appearing for the accused, stated that the Caledon Bay trial was a farce, and its proceedings quite incomprehensible to the natives involved. Webb and Dyer both had the opportunity to present a case for the Aborigines, but neglected to do so, perhaps because they realised the futility of such a venture before the presiding Judge.

Gray damned his plea for leniency by misrepresenting facts which the Aborigines had already described, and which he himself had confirmed in previous evidence. Without examining his evidence in detail, we may note Gray's statement that the Japanese did not interfere with native women. He must have had a very good reason for saying this, since it was widely acknowledged that the Japanese pearlers and trepangers (not only those implicated in the Caledon Bay massacre) did have sexual intercourse with native women. Whether or not this occurred in the case in point, on the 16th or 17th of September, is scarcely relevant to the general question.

It is hard to understand how Judge Wells could deliberately ignore all this, and blatantly declare that in this respect the natives had no justification, especially since no evidence had been put forward to refute the natives' assertions. Wells refused, too, to believe that any shooting took place, although here again no evidence was brought forward to justify his statement. In the same breath, however, he said that probably there was some

shooting, but he was satisfied this was only to frighten the natives. What would have been the reaction to this statement in any other court of law?

Japan's position at that time as a friendly nation was not a factor which should have influenced the course or judgment of the case. In any event, as Dr Cook made clear, the Japanese had violated an Aboriginal Reserve. But this point was brushed aside, as was the continuing presence of the trepanger Fred Gray on an "inviolable" Aboriginal Reserve. And the Judge's statement that "perhaps the better and kinder way would be to hang them" needs no comment.

The whole case, like those mentioned in Chapter 14, goes to show that Aboriginal evidence was not regarded seriously, and that the natives had no real opportunity of expressing their views, or presenting their own case. Later the Governor-General on the recommendation of Cabinet, signed a reprieve at a meeting of the Executive Council; after the men had served what was considered an adequate sentence, they would be returned to their own territory in Arnhem Land.

In conclusion, we may quote briefly from a statement that Rev. Dyer and Fred Gray prepared at Darwin on 19 April 1934,<sup>10</sup> before the beginning of the Caledon Bay murder trial.

'The Japanese aroused the enmity of the natives by firing at Nome and Wonggu, and later at Neidjalma, Mauwunboi, Marada and Nanjin. The author of the first firing was Inamori, who had been after one of Wonggu's women. Wonggu went to the Japanese camp and started to row with Inamori. Wonggu had a spear in his hand; Inamori fired at him, but was restrained by some of the crew, the Melville Island natives. Wonggu's women prevented him from throwing his spear. The second firing was also by Inamori; he directed it at the four above boys with the intention of driving them away, telling them to go back to Gray's camp. As they did not do so, he fired at them. Then they ran away. This was the day before the five Japanese were killed. Previously the Japanese had hit two of the Caledons with their fists, and this had also antagonised them.'

'On the morning of the killing the Japanese were working on the beach, except for Inamori, who was in the kitchen. He was

attacked first by "Taureeyununya." Neidjalma speared Kimishima (Kimasima), who afterwards swam off and eventually died on the beach some half a mile away. Nigashi was axed by Nome, who has since been killed by Mau in a fight. The Caledons had now no spears left. "Minicartoo", since killed in a fight, chased Kinjo (or Kinjui) throwing stones at him, but he escaped to Milingimbi. Gray says he was told that if he had not gone to have supper with the Japanese the previous evening they would all have been killed that night, because they had no ill feeling against him. The black who fired at Gray with one of the captured guns was speared for doing so, and the wound was not healed twelve months later. When the Japanese were in Port Bradshaw in 1932 they fired on several blacks there, namely Djirin, "Dongagu" (possibly Dangadji), Manimba, Nanjin, Waidjung, Jama and Bununggu. It was Tanaka who fired in this case. They also fought with Bununggu, "Dongetta", and Madaman with their fists'.

Dyer also wrote, on 24 April 1934,<sup>11</sup> that most of the killings in this region had resulted from provocation. But he continued, ". . . I went with the first police party in 1916, which did not land after it left Cape Barrow, and left without punishment to the natives, after many killings. Such neglect has made them what they have become . . ." Then he made the statement that has been quoted in connection with Dagiar's trial, recommending that the Government should make a display of power to impress the Aborigines of Arnhem Land. He mentioned, too, that he and Gray "brought in six Caledons, whom at first we believed were all killers; but on the way in, the number fell to three actual killers whom the police arrested. It was a tribal fight and many more were in it. Is it right to lay all the blame on these scapegoats, because they have confessed? If three must be punished all the tribe should be punished, to be really just. . . ."

It is evident, from all this, that there was no European in the area at that time who knew anything about the cultural background of the Arnhem Land Aborigines, or about the effects of culture contact on these people. No European was familiar with the dialects of these Caledon Bay natives, so that intercourse between them and the outside world was seriously restricted.

This important aspect was left in the hands of interpreters, a medium which could not lead to proper mutual understanding. There was no attempt to investigate the background of the Caledon Bay murders, and to discover the actual causes which led to the killing of the Japanese.

But looking in perspective we can see, what was not clear at the time, that these Arnhem Landers were merely the product of a particular set of circumstances. Over a long period of contact with alien peoples these Aborigines had developed certain traits as a matter of absolute necessity. They had, for instance, to depend on their own tribal organisation and law to defend their rights, and ensure justice for themselves according to their own point of view.

During the last phase of Indonesian contact, the period of European exploitation, and later Japanese infiltration, they were forced to bring the mechanism of their own defence into operation; and the result was what we have already surveyed. Their attacks on Macassans, Europeans and Japanese were for the most part brought about by provocation (and some by acquisitiveness); and these Aborigines considered, and in fact still consider, they were fully justified in acting as they did.

## CHAPTER 17

### AFTERMATH

The direct repercussions of these murders and killings are of special interest to us here.

The great Arnhem Land Reserve had been declared in 1931, as a result of Bleakley's Report<sup>1</sup> of 1928, and a conference held in 1929<sup>2</sup> by representatives of Missions, societies and associations interested in Aboriginal welfare. This report and this conference were indications of changing public opinion throughout Australia in relation to the Aboriginal question. More and more people and societies were willing to offer sympathy and, what was at that time most important, constructive suggestions.

The establishing of this Reserve, it was hoped, would put an end to undesirable alien contact in the shape of European and Japanese<sup>3</sup> traders, pearlers and beachcombers, thus halting the detribalisation of the Aborigines and ensuring greater opportunities for missionary endeavour. The Reserve was, officially, inviolable. Only missionaries, officials, and other accredited people were to be permitted within its boundaries. But it was quite impossible to patrol adequately such a long coast-line and so large a territory, and from time to time unauthorised people did enter the Reserve. This was especially the case during the first few years, when there was still a sprinkling of trepangers and pearlers, and Japanese infiltration became actually intensified. It was during these years, too, that the Aborigines committed most of the killings mentioned in the foregoing chapters.

From the natives' point of view, the formation of this Reserve meant nothing at all. Most of them knew nothing about it, and those who did cared less. Why should they bother about a

Reserve? It was their own territory, where their ancestors had lived, and they were bound to it by strong spiritual ties. Laws were passed by an alien Government, about which they knew very little, and which was (so they thought at that time) no concern of theirs. Japanese, and a few Europeans, were still round the coast; conditions had not perceptibly changed.

Since the termination of Indonesian contact there had been a lag in trading, but the Missions, which since 1916 had been spreading along the coast, were helping to fill this gap. From that date, and much earlier in the Roper River area, the Aborigines began to drift into these Mission stations and to avail themselves of the opportunities they offered. They did not as yet distinguish between the different forms of contact. The Japanese aims of exploitation were, in their eyes, very much the same as those of the Europeans, while they scarcely differentiated between these white traders and the missionaries. European traders and missionaries, officials and police, were representatives of an alien form of Government, which did not recognise the hereditary rights and legal codes of the Aborigines themselves.

How could these people judge differently, when they observed from actual cases that the missionaries, trepangers and police worked hand in hand together — as, for instance, during the Caledon Bay trial? They realised too that the Europeans were unwilling to believe them, particularly in the matter of evidence given in court. Their dialects were not understood, and the interpreters at their disposal not always reliable. What was justice to them was crime to the Europeans, an outlook largely determined by the cultural pattern of each group.

So the natives were thrown on their own resources, and felt obliged to settle the matter of their defence in their own way. When this conflicted with European interests, they seem to have realised that they would have to sublimate their own views, or else pay the full penalty of acting on their own initiative; and this penalty involved either physical violence or imprisonment or both. In the white man's court of law the Aborigines were inarticulate, and powerless to defend themselves. Had they known that an increasing number of white Australians were interested in their welfare, and ready to step forward in their

defence, they might have been flattered. It is hard to tell. More probably they would have dismissed these people and their sympathy as being irrelevant and negligible, for the eastern Arnhem Landers, in particular, have a strong sense of their own importance. These aliens did not know them intimately and personally, had not lived with them, and understood nothing of their language, and the complexities of their tribal life. No, for the time being (so they seem to have decided) they would have to depend on themselves alone, until they became articulate and their rights, as a minority, were realised and appreciated.

So much for the early days of the Arnhem Land Reserve, and for the attitude of the Aborigines living within it. We shall return later on to this subject, and see just how far conditions have changed today.

What were the direct results of the murders of Europeans and Japanese during the early 1930's? The opinion of Australians in general, apart from those who were indifferent or apathetic, seems to fall into three main categories. The extremists held that "the niggers should be taught a lesson", and that the best means of doing this was a punitive expedition. Such measures, they contended, had always succeeded in the past. The natives were, so to speak, beaten into subjection, and "cheeky" behaviour effectively discouraged. The conservative view, on the other hand, was that the culprits should be brought to justice and punished, and so made an example to others. The moderates insisted that a pacification expedition should be sent to Arnhem Land, the true circumstances of the killings investigated, and conditions altered so that there would be no need for a recurrence. As we have seen, the conservative plan was adopted and the extremist viewpoint officially discarded, while an attempt was made to put into practice the moderate view. Let us, then, glance in greater detail at some of these repercussions.

When the Minister of the Interior at Canberra heard that Traynor and Fagan had been killed by Aborigines, he declared that the matter was serious, and that some attempt should be made to secure the safety of white men legitimately engaged in the Territory.<sup>4</sup> The Darwin *Northern Standard* of 5 September 1933

announced that a punitive expedition would be sent to Arnhem Land to avenge the death of Constable McColl on Woodah Island. "Despite strong protests from missionaries and others," continued the report, "the Federal Government has sent all supplies required to equip a formidable punitive expedition against the Aborigines in Arnhem Land. Federal Ministers who have had experience of native administration favour a punitive expedition. Lieut.-Col. R. H. Weddell (then Government Resident) strongly urges the necessity of strong measures to teach the natives a lesson. It is contended that unless police authority is upheld the natives will get out of hand, and the massacre of white residents and missionaries will follow. It is argued that if once the natives get the idea they can kill with impunity there is no knowing where they will stop. On the other hand, it is claimed the sending out of a small police party, which included McColl, was ill-advised, as it only roused the natives and incited them to attack".

Missionaries and their associates in the South opposed such measures. They held meetings and protested to the Government, to some effect. But not all missionaries, apparently, were of this opinion — as witness, for example, Mr Dyer's evidence in the McColl murder case. Moderate opinion in the South swayed the Government to decide eventually against a punitive expedition. However, a police party under Constables Morey and Graham was sent out to Groote Eylandt via the Roper River. They did not plan to use Mission transport, for "as far as is possible care will be taken to remove the impression from the minds of the Aborigines that the police are working in conjunction with the missionaries. Despite reference in the Southern Press regarding a punitive expedition, Superintendent Stretton emphasised his assertion that no punitive expedition of a death-dealing nature had ever been contemplated by the Administration in connection with any police party sent or to be sent to Caledon Bay. No extensive patrol work would be done by the police party either on Groote Eylandt or by boat, in the near or distant vicinity. The police would simply camp there as a protective party until after the wet season".<sup>5</sup>

The Minister of the Interior (Mr Perkins) later decided a small party of experienced missionaries<sup>6</sup> should attempt to capture the murderers of Constable McColl and the Japanese.

We have already seen how the so-called "murderers" were eventually brought to justice. And at this juncture it is interesting to quote an opinion that appeared in the Southern Press in May 1934, after the Caledon Bay natives had been brought into Darwin for trial, and before the case had come before the Supreme Court.

"It looks as if interest in Caledon Bay may now sleep until Buck Eye and his warriors scupper a few more Japanese. A week or two ago Constable Hall was detailed to visit the region lone-handed and bring back witnesses; but the new Acting Administrator and Commissioner of Police has cancelled the senseless trip, and 'future action against the natives brought to Darwin is a matter for Government consideration'. It is to be hoped that it will think long before proceeding on confessions which might or might not have been pure bravado, and call the farce off. Everybody has had a fair innings — the missionaries their lime-light and a Government subsidy, the Abos a free trip and some new experiences, the flapper Press its sensations, and the tax payers their usual privilege of paying for the whole muddle. So everybody should be satisfied."<sup>7</sup>

One of the Territorians, too, among others, had something to say on the murder of white men by Aborigines.<sup>8</sup> "A report comes into Darwin, we'll say of a murder or murders of white men. The police are at once despatched out to capture the native killers. They are captured, brought to Darwin, tried and convicted, sent to Fanny Bay for life. This is only one side of the affair. The public are satisfied. The murderer has been caught and convicted and the murdered man or men avenged. Now we'll look at the other side. The powers that be have never been bothered with this side. The Abo. witnesses who are brought to the trial of these murderers when in court will say anything that pleases, their word not being worth a pinch of salt. Now what did these murdered men do to the blacks to cause their loss of life? An Abo. does not kill without a reason. Was it loot, or were the white men

interfering with or kidnapping their lubras, or were they shooting at or over them, or were they fraternising with the blacks, one of the gravest errors a white man can commit? If any of these happenings had occurred other than loot, the Abo. has no redress. The only law he recognises is to kill. He cannot and does not know how to take proceedings against the white man, and furthermore would not be given a hearing were these killings of the white men on the coast caused by any of these happenings? None has bothered to investigate. The Abo. killed a white, that's sufficient. We know Japanese have been killed for their interference with lubras, but what about the white murdered men? Was their crime the same? I cannot tell, because it has never been investigated. My maxim is 'A good Abo. is a dead Abo.' but when it comes to fair play I'm with the Abo. as well as the white man. . . . The greatest mistake is to allow the Abo. to step over the line, fraternise with them, and allow the Abo. to size them up and then their troubles begin, ending only in one way — camp looted or the men murdered".

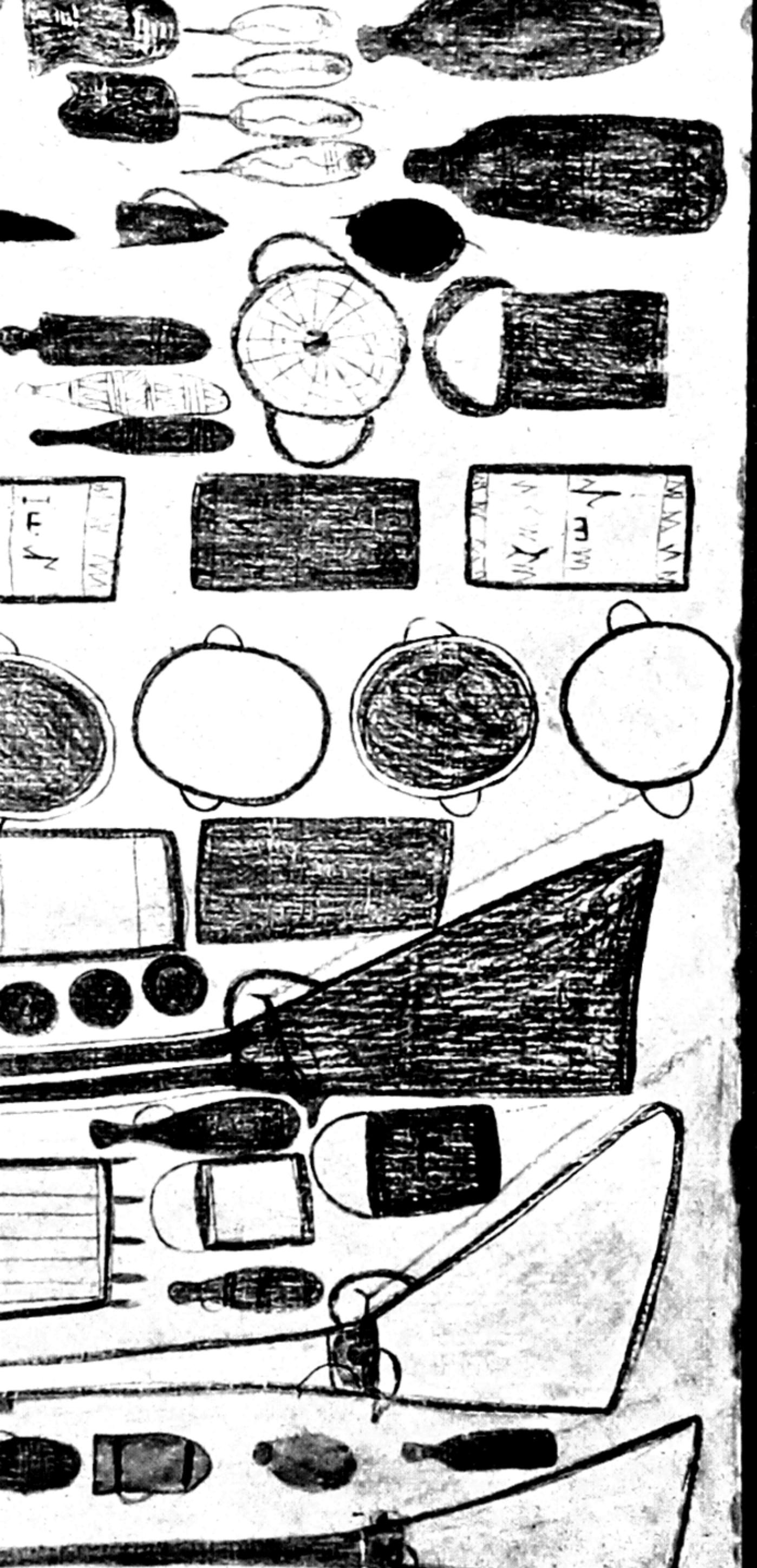
Mr R. MacDonald, of the Northern Territory Gaol Service, also had comments to make. "When the natives of Arnhem Land are treated decently they are friendly, but imposition and ill treatment are keenly resented. That is why many Japanese trepang fishers and a few white men have felt the full blast of the Aborigines' hostility, and why Arnhem Land is reputed to be peopled by murderous blacks. Men fall very low in those waters. If they would only let the blacks alone they would be all right. They promise the natives all sorts of things, take them hundreds of miles away from their homes, and leave them with nothing. The black will do a lot for a promise — but he'll also do a lot if that promise is not fulfilled".<sup>9</sup>

Towards the end of 1933, the Commonwealth Government made a grant to meet the cost of the peace expedition that the Church Missionary Society had sent to Caledon Bay. It was decided that the Roper River Mission should be closed and a new one opened at Caledon Bay, since the establishment of a Mission station was considered to be an effective means of checking lawlessness among the local natives.<sup>10</sup> But some missionaries were opposed to this move, and the Presbyterian *Messenger* protested:



*Plate 12a: Drawing: A Macassan prau.*

*Plate 12b: Japanese luggers off Cape Stewart.*



*Plate 13: Drawing:  
Various articles  
that were  
introduced by the  
Indonesians.*

"We believe it is a grave blunder to call in the missionaries to become agents of the police . . ."<sup>11</sup> The peace expedition had no really tangible result. There was an unsuccessful attempt to establish a Mission station at Caledon Bay; and the Roper River Mission station did not close down.

An important consequence of the Woodah Island and Caledon Bay murders, the outcry in the Southern Press, and the general agitation of the Administration and missionary bodies and associations, was the appointment of Dr Donald Thomson to visit eastern and north-eastern Arnhem Land. On his first expedition, which lasted from March 1935 until January 1936, he covered a wide area, sailing right around the coast and making some trips into the interior.<sup>12</sup>

As a result, Dr Thomson made certain recommendations regarding the future welfare and government of the Arnhem Landers.<sup>13</sup> It was desirable, he said, to have "absolute segregation. . . . The social structure *in toto* should be preserved as an essential factor in the life of these people". and "the nomadic habits of these people must be regarded as an integral part of their culture. The collecting of natives, not detribalised, into compounds or institutions should be prohibited. If it is desired to teach Christianity to these people, it should be insisted that the Christian teacher or missionary be prepared to visit the people in their own country, and not to gather them about a station or Mission school". Dr Thomson suggested also the "establishment and maintenance of patrols to move about among the nomadic tribes of Arnhem Land, in particular to protect the natives from interference and exploitation, and to maintain a state of domestic peace. Many of the 'attacks' that have occurred in this territory have undoubtedly been merely retaliatory measures to which the natives have been goaded. A particularly unfortunate aspect of these incidents is the fact that vengeance may sometimes be delayed and fall ultimately upon an entirely innocent individual". He listed special qualifications for men entrusted with these patrols, and advised that a medical officer should be employed.

A number of his other recommendations have a more general application and do not specifically relate to Arnhem Land: 'the abolition of the anomalous system under which police constables

act as Protectors of Aborigines; the adoption of a settled, uniform policy for the treatment of the whole of the Aboriginal population of Australia; the immediate establishment of a Department of Native Affairs staffed by men selected solely for their special qualifications and sympathies for dealing with the natives, etc.'.

Without commenting in detail on these recommendations of Dr Thomson, we should point out that complete segregation is today only an ideal, which could not be put into practice. It would, moreover, be unsatisfactory to the natives themselves, and especially to these coastal Arnhem Landers who have had so many long years of alien contact. The most enlightened course is to bring about their gradual adjustment to changing conditions, trying to keep the best elements in their traditional culture, and at the same time introducing them to the new culture and society to which they must eventually adapt themselves.

Although the Aborigines are not actually being gathered into compounds, most native camps around the Arnhem Land Mission stations are tending to become more or less static; and under present conditions it would be difficult to alter this. The suggested patrols through Arnhem Land were never instituted, although in the last few years several small patrols under Department of Native Affairs officials have penetrated some regions, and the Administration patrol boat has made a number of trips along the whole Arnhem Land coast. For a long time there was no full-time medical officer concentrating on Aboriginal welfare,<sup>13a</sup> while the majority of police are still "Protectors of Aborigines". Even today there is no co-ordinated Aboriginal policy for the whole of Australia, although several abortive moves have been made in this direction. Each State still controls its own Aboriginal population, with its own local regulations. But the Northern Territory is under Commonwealth jurisdiction. Here a Native Affairs Branch was established in 1939, and some of its patrol officers have received training in anthropology and allied subjects.

Even if Dr Thomson's recommendations were not all put into effect, and even if some are not accorded full approval today by anthropologists and administrators, they were nevertheless significant as far as Arnhem Land was concerned. This was the first time in the history of Arnhem Land, apart from Missionary

enterprise, that an attempt was made by officialdom to understand the problems of the natives themselves, and the first constructive step in a situation that desperately needed an unbiassed and sympathetic approach.

Other forces too had been at work behind the scenes, and indeed succeeded in influencing official opinion to a greater extent than did the work of Dr Thomson. To describe this fully would require access to private and confidential papers and so on which are at present unavailable. Unfortunately, from the historian's point of view, these have not been published, and he is forced to rely on the *Reports* of Dr Thomson and of contemporary committees and enquiries. Thomson's *Reports* and recommendations were preceded by much official activity and pressure from scientists (such as Professor A. P. Elkin), Mission bodies and other agencies. Thomson's *Reports* were in harmony with a growing section of public opinion which had for several years been bringing pressure to bear on the Commonwealth Government.

This led eventually to the formulation of what was regarded as a new and positive policy for the Aborigines in the Northern Territory. It was drawn up by the Minister of the Interior (Hon. J. McEwen) and the Secretary of the Department (Mr J. Carrodus), with the help of Professor Elkin. Thus Thomson's recommendations were only one factor in the official and unofficial combination which was serving to introduce a new epoch into Arnhem Land.

Dr Thomson's second trip to Arnhem Land extended from June 1936 to October 1937.<sup>14</sup> During this trip he took back to their home territory the three natives, Neidjalma, Mau and Nagaia, who had been serving sentences for their part in the Caledon Bay massacre.

Dr Thomson's most valuable contribution, in this case, was his report on European and Japanese activities in Arnhem Land. Since this has a direct bearing on the subject we may quote some of his comments.<sup>15</sup> During 1936-37, he said, the invasion of the Reserve by Japanese, and by Europeans (chiefly from Darwin), reached such proportions that conditions he had previously reported were intensified. The Reserve was being violated to such

an extent that it was a Reserve only in name. Not only were the natives widely exploited by white men and Japanese, but they were often taken to Darwin and other places by boat, either as passengers, or on vessels with Japanese crews in return for the prostitution of their women. During 1936, in spite of the lessons of 1933, white men were engaged in trepang fishing and other activities, with depôts on the Reserve along the eastern and western coast of Arnhem Land.

Throughout 1937 the growing number of Japanese-manned pearlimg vessels in the waters of the Reserve was a potent factor in the local unrest that was becoming steadily more serious each month. In May 1936-37, states Dr Thomson, there were upwards of seventy vessels within sight at one time from the beach at Mooroonga Island in the Crocodile Group.<sup>16</sup> One of these vessels, the *Tenjin Maru*, had a crew of fifteen men, so that at a conservative estimate there were perhaps seven hundred Japanese on the Arnhem Land coast at this time. The pearlimg fleets included boats from Darwin as well as from Thursday Island, in addition to the Japanese vessels. It became their practice to resort to certain anchorages, especially at the King and Liverpool Rivers, at Cape Stewart, Mooroonga Island, and Elcho Island; and here large congregations of Aborigines met the boats. Unrest, instability and lawlessness increased among them, and a state very near chaos resulted.

Dr Thomson, at this time, urged that attention should be paid to his recommendations regarding complete segregation, and the inviolability of the Reserve. He did not stipulate permanent segregation, for all time, but declared: "It should be the policy to maintain these inviolable reserves for the natives who are still in possession of their culture, until and unless a sound working policy and one in the best interests of the Aboriginals is established, tested, and proved by experience over a long period, among the natives who are already detribalised".<sup>17</sup> In another Report he made recommendations similar to those already cited, elaborating on some points but in no way modifying his previous views.<sup>18</sup> These serve as a valuable basis for future discussion and formulation of native policy.

But although Dr Thomson's reports showed the disastrous results of Japanese infiltration, nothing really effective was done in respect of this until the end of 1941 brought war with Japan. Then, at last, intercourse of these people with the Aborigines was brought to a close.

Little has been said here concerning missionary enterprise in Arnhem Land, a form of contact which has profoundly influenced certain aspects of native life, even though it has only a partial bearing on the main theme of this book. We shall refer to this again in the following chapter. Another factor with which we have not dealt concerns Prof. Lloyd Warner,<sup>19</sup> already mentioned, who carried out anthropological work, principally in the Milingimbi area, between 1926 and 1929 — that is, before the epoch we have been considering in this chapter. This was the first detailed anthropological work undertaken in the Arnhem Land region;<sup>20</sup> and it is reasonable to suppose that his studies did, to some extent at least, influence native thought. He and his work were still remembered in 1946-47, more or less clearly, by natives along the coast from Milingimbi to Yirrkalla.

## CHAPTER 18

### THE PRESENT DAY

Looking back over the years we can glimpse, in perspective, the panorama of contact that the Arnhem Landers have had with peoples of alien groups. We have seen, too, something of the effects. At first, the Aborigines were willing to adjust themselves to foreign ways. This period lasted for some time, and was accompanied by a certain amount of assimilation, but its main feature was the gradual conditioning of these natives to the waves of contact that were to follow. While they were adjusting themselves to Indonesian infiltration and settlement, they were at the same time building up a strong resistance against other forms of alien contact; and they were absorbing into their own culture certain new elements, rejecting others that could not readily be adapted to the existing pattern. Religious ideas, ceremonies and song-cycles, as well as material objects, were accepted, and welded on to the indigenous framework without destroying its basic structure. The new economic organisation that arose had its origin in local as well as in alien forms. During this early period the Aborigines' social horizons were extended and their world was no longer the small place that it had been; and for some of them, too, this involved travel and personal observation beyond the confines of the Australian mainland.

As time passed European visitors, settlers and traders made their appearance, shattering the delicate balance that the Aborigines and Indonesians had built up on the basis of their trading relationships. This Arnhem Land coast, that the Indonesians had looked on as their own preserve, was now disputed by a nation

which extended its dominion over the Australian mainland. An era had drawn to a close, and the last phase of Indonesian contact had begun.

As the years passed, as the settlers penetrated steadily into western Arnhem Land and European exploration was intensified, these new traders extended their fields, and ill-feeling developed between Indonesians and Europeans. All this led to a period of unsettlement as far as the Aborigines were concerned. Their smoothly functioning trading ties were broken. Competition became the order of the day, and with it came thinly-disguised exploitation.

The Indonesians not only clashed with the Europeans. They succeeded in stirring up unrest and antagonism among the Aborigines — antagonism that was later manifested against European and Indonesian alike. In the confusion that followed, with the rush to exploit local products and available native labour, the Aborigines received the full impact of these unsettled times. The result for them was, in the western region, disaster and depopulation, and in the east, spasmodic fighting to assert themselves and to defend their rights. When the Indonesian trading was brought to a close the whole position was accentuated and the increased activities of the European traders did not serve to improve matters.

Japanese visitors, too, became more numerous and helped to bring about a state of affairs in which the Aborigines were more or less continually on the defensive. It was this background that produced the murders and "massacres" of the early 1930's. But even then, although Arnhem Land received a great deal of attention from interested and dis-interested bodies in the South, as well as in the Territory itself, conditions remained fundamentally the same. Certainly, physical violence was largely reduced, but many other insidious forms of contact continued. Through Dr Thomson's recommendations, permission to enter Arnhem Land was granted less readily to traders and other non-Aborigines, especially since in 1931 this region had been declared an inviolable Reserve. But this did not really check the influx of Japanese into these coastal waters. In fact their infiltration was intensified during this period and brought with it, as we have seen, many

undesirable elements. Dr Thomson, for example, has commented on the demoralising effects of Japanese association with the Aborigines.

Summarising, then, we can observe that the long period of Baijini-Macassan contact resulted in some measure of adjustment between alien and Aboriginal; and while no other elements were present, the *status quo* was maintained. With the advent of another cultural group conditions were altered, and the period of unsettlement commenced. As still other elements made their appearance on the north coast, this unrest among the Aborigines was accentuated, and lasted more or less continuously until 1942, when they began to experience repercussions from the second World War.

However, the establishment of the Arnhem Land Reserve, the murders of the 1930's, and the pacification expeditions which followed, did herald a new epoch. And although this period of unsettlement continued, mainly owing to the presence of large numbers of Japanese, it was actually drawing to a close. The administration was becoming more directly interested in the welfare of the Arnhem Landers. Recommendations relating to Aboriginal policy were being drafted, missionary enterprise was being extended, with more apparent official backing, and a Native Affairs Branch was gradually being formed. These were the principal indications that the old period was coming to an end, even if the new ideas could not yet be put into practice. Indeed, their execution was postponed for some years by the entry of the Japanese into the second World War, and the placing of the Territory under complete military control.

Let us pause to consider the position of the Missions in Arnhem Land, and their part in the general overall picture of culture contact.

Between 1846 and 1848, a Roman Catholic missionary priest named Rev. D. Angelo Confalonière was stationed at Port Essington.<sup>1</sup> In 1900, also in western Arnhem Land, a small Mission station was started under the control of a Mr Lennox, but its stay was brief and unsuccessful.<sup>2</sup> The Roper River Mission began operations in the first years of this century (1908) and extended its activities to Groote Eylandt in 1921, concentrating there at

first on half-caste children, but later taking in full-blooded Aborigines. During the early years of the Groote Eylandt station there was continual dissension between the missionaries and Aborigines. At one time it was found necessary to barricade the Mission buildings and to build a stockade against an expected attack by mainland Aborigines, who were camping nearby in some force. These were stormy days. But eventually a more or less static camp of peaceful natives grew up around the Mission, and an increasing number came into direct contact with the missionaries. At Oenpelli, too, in western Arnhem Land, the Church Missionary Society in 1925 took over a Government Aboriginal cattle station which had been managed by the former buffalo shooter "Paddy" Cahill. The station was allowed to pass into Mission hands mainly because it was, at the time, failing to pay its way.

The Methodists opened their first station at Goulburn Island in 1916. In the words of one of the missionaries: "A few natives arrived and offered to help with the work, and shortly afterwards there were a hundred men, women and children on the station. The girls and boys were induced to attend the open-air school and think of the Mission station as their home".<sup>3</sup> There were half-castes here too, but a little before the War they were moved to the new station that was set up at Croker Island.<sup>4</sup> Later on Elcho Island Mission was opened; the missionaries withdrew to Milingimbi when the Petroleum Company commenced operations but finally returned. Milingimbi Mission continued to function. In 1935 the Methodists commenced a fourth Mission station at Yirrkalla, in the north-eastern corner of Arnhem Land.

That is to say, at the time of the most intense Japanese contact on the north coast seven Mission stations had been established, fringing the Reserve from west to east, and from north-east to south. These Missions were in contact with the great majority of local Aborigines, except for two or three small "pockets" of people in the Liverpool district, on the mainland south of Milingimbi, and around Rose River. Even these had indirect and spasmodic association with the Mission stations. Points of white settlement in the shape of Missions, then, as now,

virtually encircled Arnhem Land. Static camps of natives (severely criticised in Dr Thomson's reports) were formed at all these places, so that today, and as the years pass, more and more natives look to one or more of these stations as their "home". They remain in the Bush for increasingly shorter periods, finding it always harder to keep away from these centres as they come to rely on the introduced food and trade goods. And so they find it necessary to pay lip-service to Christianity.

We are not concerned here with discussing in detail missionary endeavour in this region, because this would require a great deal more space than can be spared for it here. Readers interested in this form of contact should consult the relevant Government reports, as well as those issued by the Mission bodies themselves.<sup>5</sup> No scientific study of this problem has as yet been made in Australia. Here, however, we are interested only in broad principles. More detailed discussion of Mission and administrative policies, against a background of the general Australian situation, is given by Professor Elkin in his *Citizenship for the Aborigines*.<sup>5a</sup>

Mission activities before the recent War were virtually confined to establishing themselves on a more or less self-supporting basis. And since they were centres of white settlement, with them came many features of European culture. This is an important point to remember. These missionaries not only brought certain elements of their own Christian doctrine, but also carried with them the essential ingredients of their own culture. Whether or not the missionary desired it, the acceptance of Christianity by the Aborigines thus involved their simultaneous adoption of European ways, at the expense of their own culture and their own religion. If the Aborigines wanted to live in peaceful association with these missionaries and to receive their alleged benefits in the form of food, goods and education, they were obliged either to discard their own way of life or to adjust it in some way to changing conditions. In actual practice they were left with no alternative. Conditions were unsettled, alien influences demoralising, and tribal disintegration imminent. Gradually they drifted into the stations, hoping to take advantage of their presence, and at the same time to retain their traditional heritage.

But it was not possible for any group, under the circumstances in which the Arnhem Landers found themselves, to have their cake and also to eat it.

The Missions were interested in gathering together groups of natives around the stations. Only in this way could settlements be built up, and the new ways firmly entrenched in the minds of the natives. They built houses in which to live, and churches in which to propagate their religion — for this was, after all, the main reason for their presence. Gardens were cultivated; and some of them engaged in trading; for missions had to be economically "safe", just like other forms of business. Schools at this period functioned very intermittently. Their range of subjects was limited and related primarily to religious training. Aboriginal children were not given a clear picture of European culture and its relation to the rest of the world, nor taught how to adjust themselves to these new conditions. Food was distributed either for work accomplished, or virtually as "bait" to attract natives to visit the stations, or to attend church or school. But on the whole the work of missionaries seems to have been dictated by purely humanitarian ideals.

The functioning of their stations depended greatly on the personality of the superintendents, and on their tolerant and sympathetic understanding of Aboriginal custom and belief. The Missions were acting as bulwarks against more unpleasant aspects of European and alien contact. They did demonstrate to the natives that all Europeans were not the same, and that some had more kindly intentions than others. Missionaries attended to the sick, the aged and the young. But these early years of Mission contact were mainly occupied with "digging in", with establishing their position and developing a formula by which to approach their problems. The natives had now a refuge to which they could retreat. In spite of all this, the presence of Missions did not prevent their contact with the Japanese and the European traders.

With the first raid on Darwin on 19 February 1942, when the North was thrown into confusion, Japanese trading activities ceased. Plans were made to evacuate female missionaries (as well as civilian women and children), and many of the mixed-bloods from Croker Island and Groote Eylandt; and the whole northern

part of the Territory was placed under complete military control as from 21 February of that year.<sup>6</sup>

The Aborigines of Arnhem Land soon realised this position. Some drifted back to the bush, while others stayed around the Missions, with their skeleton male staffs. Others again, particularly from the Roper River, from western and south-western Arnhem Land, and from Milingimbi, went overland to seek employment with the Army, and later on special Army native settlements were set up along the main North-South road.<sup>7</sup> The Missions tried to keep going, but owing to staff shortages their work was virtually at a standstill. Everything was subordinated to military control and activity. The Army made patrols out to Oenpelli, and to other places on the fringe of Arnhem Land. The Air Force set up bases at north Goulburn Island, near Oenpelli, at Gove (near Yirrkalla), in the Wessels, and on Groote Eylandt. At Gove, the largest of these, hundreds of Army, Naval and Air Force personnel were stationed or passed through, and came into direct contact with local Aborigines. Many of the natives themselves experienced something of the more unpleasant aspects of warfare. Milingimbi station was bombed, and in the Wessels three natives lost their lives when a missionary was taken prisoner on a Japanese seaplane. Naval boats patrolled the coast fairly regularly, and aeroplanes were a common sight to the natives.

Without dwelling at any length on this period, we may say briefly that it brought with it further unsettlement. The Aborigines were thrown into intensive contact with a great many people belonging to a very different culture, and representing various shades of opinion and behaviour within that culture. Apart from physical appearances, they were in the natives' eyes quite unlike previous visitors. They were neither traders nor officials, police nor missionaries, but a group which, as far as the natives were concerned, was more or less disinterested. Some treated the local people in the way that Europeans usually did, and others looked on them rather as fellow human beings. Their services were required from time to time; they were employed in various ways, receiving payment in money or goods, and many of them also were given presents of various kinds.

Military contact upset the Aborigines' economic system, and caused some disorganisation in their camp life. They were so thoroughly preoccupied with the intruders that certain features of indigenous life inevitably suffered. Or rather, perhaps, the disintegration that had really commenced early in the 19th century, and was intensified in the 1930's, was precipitated. Elements that had been weakened by this early strain were now yielding ground. Insubordination became common among younger men and women, and certain established codes of behaviour showed signs of collapse. Strange and novel aspects of European culture were thrust upon them, and often they were bewildered with what they saw, and confused at what they heard. The impact had been sudden, and not gradual as it had been in the past; and although these Arnhem Landers had been conditioned throughout the centuries against alien contact, they were not ready to receive it in such force, and at such speed, as this.

However, this military contact, which lasted for approximately four years, did have some beneficial effects. The Aborigines came to realise that European culture and opinion were not uniform and static, but existed in various forms. This was all to the good. Many of the natives developed a strong desire to learn more about European conditions, and how these affected their own way of life. In some instances they became articulate, and demanded some form of practical education and training through which they could achieve this knowledge; but this, of course, was not general. Many young men and women who sought these aims were classed as revolutionaries by older people, who believed that they were trying to weaken tribal authority and cast aside the traditional dictates of their group. It is true, too, that in some cases this was the underlying motive, a consequence of the unsettled period through which they had come. But there were some who genuinely desired to find means of adjusting themselves and their culture to European ways. They desired, indeed, something that few Europeans were capable of giving. Missionaries, administrative officers, and even anthropologists, had not gone deeply enough into the practical side of this problem.

The military forces, too, satisfied the Arnhem Landers' love of material possessions. To most of them, it was like a return to the

old Indonesian days of plenty. Organised work was available; and in return they received food, clothing, tobacco, and other objects which they considered necessary to their well-being. This proved to be another disintegrative feature, for indigenous forms of economy were disturbed, and the Aborigines came to rely on the European to supply their immediate needs. There was not, now, the urgent need to hunt and forage for food; and they tended to congregate fairly regularly in one place, usually on the Mission station or near the military settlement.

This particular form of contact is so recent that it is very difficult to see its problems in true perspective. It is possible only to observe the effects with care, and to conjecture as to the future.

Civilians were allowed to return to Darwin on 28 February 1946, and civil administration was resumed from the end of July 1945.<sup>8</sup> In the years that followed, up to the present day, the Missions have been concerned primarily with re-establishing themselves, after losing so much ground during the War period. Mission staffs were depleted, and only now are being built up again. New buildings had to be constructed, new gardens cultivated. In fact, all aspects of their work needed reconstruction. Some Missions suffered more than others; but actually all benefited from this renovating approach, for most were desperately in need of this even before the War. The old relatively lethargic ways of the past, although they were virtually pioneering days, had to go, if Mission contact was to be of constructive value to the Aborigines themselves. Saving souls for the indefinite future was really to no purpose; the natives required practical help in the problems which beset them. And today the majority of the missionaries realise this aspect of their work. They are educational and humanitarian agents of their culture, and their presentation of formal religion should take a secondary place.

If the long period of unsettlement in Arnhem Land is to end, if the new epoch of which we spoke previously is to continue, and if the Aborigines are to be adjusted to changing conditions and a European way of life, then the missionary and the administrator must have a common purpose: to develop among these Aborigines some understanding of European culture and ideals,

to retain the best elements in their own culture, to set them on a firm economic footing, and above all to allow them to think and act for themselves. These aspirations are, as yet, only embryonic. Whether or not they will come to fruition rests primarily on the European agencies within the boundaries of Arnhem Land, and those immediately interested in its future.

During the war years, then, Mission activity was at a standstill. Church services were still held, but schools and training centres are only now being properly organised. Here, again a co-ordinated plan is needed where educational activities are concerned, and recently the Commonwealth Office of Education has been paying some attention to this.

When the Armed Forces withdrew from the greater part of Arnhem Land, the Aborigines were thrown on to the resources of the Missions, and they looked to these centres to fill the gap. Now, as we have seen, many of them are coming to settle more or less permanently around the Mission settlements, and they are demanding employment so that they may maintain the standard of living to which they have grown accustomed. But so far none of the Mission stations has been able to employ all of these potential labourers, and none has adequate means of training them for this work that they desire. In present circumstances these stations can only take a certain number of employees. Before others can be absorbed, new industries must be developed. This, together with education, is one of the most urgent problems facing Missions and administrations today. Employment must be relatively permanent and also remunerative, if it is to have desirable results. There are many incidental problems to be considered as well.

Although some aspects of native traditional life are still virile today, others are showing signs of collapse. Past alien contact has left its mark on the indigenous culture. This is more obvious in western Arnhem Land than in the east, although even there certain elements have almost disappeared. But a well balanced educational approach, including occupational training, should help to arrest social and cultural disintegration, strengthen traditional ties, and provide strength to meet future demands.

Today more Northern Territory missionaries and Native Affairs' officers are going out on to the field with these ideas in mind, assisted by some elementary training in anthropology. This is a beginning that promises well for the future. But some missionaries are still distrustful of anthropological methods, and view with uneasiness any plans for the eventual independence of the Aborigines.

In the past, and even now, it has been the practice of the Methodist Overseas Mission to employ Fijian missionaries on its Arnhem Land stations. This has brought about an additional problem. Contact of alien groups with Arnhem Landers has through the years been sufficiently complex without adding still further elements. Such Fijians have tried, often unconsciously, to re-create the conditions of their homeland, to surround themselves with an artificial environment that bears little relation to the problems of the Aborigines.

In 1946 it was proposed to establish a training centre at Gove Settlement, near Yirrkalla, where the Native Affairs' Branch had taken over quantities of Air Force equipment. This in itself was an excellent idea. But the choice of area was unsatisfactory, and being close to the Mission station aroused considerable hostility among the Methodists in the South as well as in the Territory. Today the plans for this ambitious project have been shelved, although it is said that they have not been entirely abandoned. Mission schools are only just beginning to function again, and the Arnhem Landers have no opportunity of availing themselves of secular education.

Since the recent War, Arnhem Land has been the focal point of anthropological and other expeditions. Apart from the work of Professor A. P. Elkin and the present writers, in eastern and western Arnhem Land, the Aborigines have been subjected to the large National Geographic party, composed of Australians and Americans. Just what bearing this work will have on the future of Arnhem Land and its people has yet to be seen. Moreover, writers and photographers have travelled through Arnhem Land, although their contact has been relatively superficial. Patrols have been made by members of the Native Affairs' Branch, especially in the Liverpool River district, and around the Cato River near

Yirrkalla; and the Government patrol vessel *Kuru* has travelled at intervals along the coast. There is talk, too, of establishing a new Church Missionary Society Leper Station at Bickerton Island, near Groote, instead of sending local people in need of treatment away to the Channel Island Leprosarium in Darwin Harbour.

The natives are still receiving a fair amount of European contact, apart from the missionaries and Native Affairs' patrol officers. But this is quite unlike what they experienced before the War. There is not, as yet, the same economic exploitation once indulged in by Japanese and European traders. Arnhem Land has been closed to outside commercial undertakings, and there is a feeling today that the natives should be able themselves to exploit their land and marine products, and to develop industries which will be remunerative to themselves. But in such a plan there are many pitfalls. Recently, for example, European pearlers and trepangers have been permitted by the Administration a base at Truant Island, to the north-east of the English Company Islands, and to engage as employees a certain number of local natives. Crocodile shooters are creeping in too, slipping along the coast and down the tidal rivers. And the Aborigines are wondering, with mixed feelings, if this will be the thin edge of the wedge, and whether the old days will return.

From the verbal literature of the Aborigines and the written data of the Europeans we have been able to learn something of the colourful past of the Arnhem Land coast. The unknown has been pushed back to a time when the Great South Land of Australia was still unvisited by Dutch, Portuguese and other Europeans — a time when intercourse with the outside world was at a minimum and, according to local mythology, the great Spirit Beings moved about the land.

We have been concerned primarily with the Arnhem Landers as they were and as they are. The problems emerge themselves from our study; and with them — if we are to learn from mistakes of the past — some of their solutions. The stage is set for almost anything. The administration and the Missions have it in their power to implement a policy which will be of lasting benefit to

these people; and it rests with them whether the Aborigines will be plunged into another period of unrest, or will gradually become adjusted to changing conditions. If they were completely segregated, cut off from the outside world, their society and culture would in time recover their equilibrium. But they cannot live under such artificial circumstances today. Even if their Reserve is officially inviolable, influences are being brought to bear upon them from within and beyond its boundaries. There are missionaries, Government and police officials, passing ships, medical men, scientists, and other visitors; and for the most part less directly associated with these natives, but important in their ultimate effects, are the men (and women) of the Territory who would like to see the Reserve, with its 31,200 square miles, thrown open once more to European enterprise and activity.

As the Northern Territory develops, the very existence of this Reserve must from time to time come under review. There will be (as there has been) commercial pressure on the Government by firms and individuals anxious to exploit its economic potentialities.

To the citizen of the South, and even to the Territorian, Arnhem Land is still a glamorous land of mystery, the site, perhaps, of untold wealth. Still rumours will come of reefs of untouched gold, reminiscent of those that started the fruitless search of the Robinson prospecting party in 1875-76. The story of oil will be revived, and people will remember the Naptha Petroleum Company on Elcho Island. Wolfram and tin miners will still decry the boundaries of a Reserve that keep them from the rich seams which they envisage there; and even recently there have been rumours of radio-active minerals in southern Arnhem Land.

What of the interior of Arnhem Land, explorers and prospectors will ask? For few Europeans have traversed its rugged plateaux, and parts are still completely unknown. What of the manganese collected by the Macassans, and the rich cypress forests that are comparatively untouched? What of the cattle combines in search of new land to run their hordes, thinking of the fertile plains around the old Florida station in the Arafura

country, and the pastures of the Cobourg Cattle Company? And the tourist companies, brooding on the exotic coast-line from which they are excluded, will redouble their efforts to obtain a foothold.

But the greatest prize lies comparatively untouched and unexploited since the Japanese fishers departed: the abundance of marine products — trepang, pearl-shell, seed-pearls, tortoise-shell and the like. Here is a territory with hundreds of miles of coastline, from which the Indonesian traders in past years obtained so rich a harvest; a coast-line which employed, before the last war, hundreds of Japanese.

Nevertheless, Arnhem Land must remain a country for the Arnhem Landers alone, a people who are bound to its inhospitable inland as to its coastal areas by traditional and spiritual ties, who have fought to retain their integrity and their territorial rights. And now, to maintain these hereditary rights, and achieve even a stronger grip on the land, they must exploit its natural resources themselves. In this respect they are dependent on the Europeans around them, for they require training and educational facilities, allied to a sympathetic approach, during this period of transition. And when the time comes, when they have succeeded in adjusting themselves to the conditions that have been forced upon them, then at last they may share with us the benefits of their country's resources, as fellow citizens of the Commonwealth.

## POSTSCRIPT

Since the writing of this volume some changes have taken place in the administration of the Arnhem Land Reserve, while several scientific surveys have been made to various parts of it. Certain areas have been opened to European infiltration. The Australian Aluminium Commission has been permitted to prospect for bauxite in the vicinity of Melville Bay and Castlereagh Bay, as well as on Marchinbar Island in the Wessels. Mineral workings have begun near the Bulman, north-east of Mainoru, in southern Arnhem Land. Pearling rights have been granted in the vicinity of Truant Island not far from Cape Arnhem, and Japanese pearling fleets are returning to work the rich Arafura Sea.

The Commonwealth Government has now decided to vary the provisions relating to the control of mineral resources on Aboriginal reserves. "If any part of a native reserve has ceased to be necessary for the use and benefit of the natives it may be severed from the reserve and, if mining takes place on the severed portion, royalties will be paid into a special fund to be applied to the welfare of the natives. The method of revocation has been made subject to strict safeguards involving successively a report by the Director of Native Welfare, a recommendation by the Administrator, approved by the Minister and notification to the Commonwealth Parliament."<sup>a</sup>

All this means that another Chapter in the history of the remaining 4000 odd Aborigines of Arnhem Land has begun.

For these Arnhem Landers the effects of the past cannot be completely eradicated. Such effects have indeed moulded current

<sup>a</sup> Second Native Welfare Conference in Canberra on 29 September 1952; *Native Welfare in Australia*, by Paul Hasluck, Minister for Territories, Perth 1953.

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attitudes. The promises of a new era, in our terms, are still only dimly understood. It thus remains for Government administration, anthropologists and missionaries to watch and guide these new forms of contact along avenues that will be beneficial to the Arnhem Land people themselves.

If this volume has indicated some of the problems involved, that in itself should serve as a potent factor in leading to a constructive understanding.

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### CHAPTER I

<sup>1</sup> *Vide*, for example, E. Scott, *A Short History of Australia*, 1829, Chapter 11; J. E. Heeres, *The Part Borne by the Dutch in the Discovery of Australia*, London 1899; G. A. Wood, *Discovery of Australia*, London 1923; and A. Grenfell Price, *The History and Problems of the Northern Territory of Australia, The John Murtagh Macrossan Lectures, 1930*, Adelaide, 1930, p. 2.

The first Dutch vessel known to have visited the Australian coast, in the vicinity of the eastern side of the Gulf of Carpentaria, was the "Duyfken", commanded by Jansz. Zeachern, in the "Mauritius", landed and named Arnheim Land at the western point of the opening of the Gulf. Elsewhere it is said that the region derives its name from the Dutch vessel "Aernem" which in company with the "Pera" coasted round the Gulf in 1623, under the command of Cartensz.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Knut Dahl, *In Savage Australia, An Account of a Hunting and Collecting Expedition to Arnhem Land and Dampier Land*, London 1926, p. xii.

<sup>3</sup> M. Flinders, *A Voyage to Terra Australis, etc.*, London 1814, 2 vols.; and P. King, *Narrative of a Survey of the Intertropical and Western Coasts of Australia*, performed between the years 1818-1822, London 1826.

<sup>4</sup> I. Idriess, *Man Tracks*, Sydney 1936, and *In Crocodile Land*, Sydney 1946.

<sup>5</sup> C. Barrett, *Coast of Adventure*, Melbourne 1941. This is probably the best of the "popular" books on this subject.

<sup>6</sup> W. E. Harney, *North of 23°*, Sydney 1946, and *Brimming Billabongs*, Sydney 1947.

<sup>7</sup> A. Marshall, *Ourselves Writ Strange*, Melbourne 1948.

<sup>8</sup> C. Warburton, *Buffalo Trail*, Sydney, undated.

<sup>9</sup> E. Hill, *The Territory*, Sydney 1951.

<sup>10</sup> C. Simpson, *Adam in Ochre*, Sydney 1951.

<sup>11</sup> C. Fenton, *Flying Doctor*, Sydney 1948, scattered references.

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<sup>12</sup> That is, documentary evidence in the South Australian Archives Department of the Public Library, e.g., *Northern Territory Incoming and Outgoing Correspondence, Official Reports*, etc. Also early newspaper references, and data in the Mitchell Library, Sydney. *Vide* also *South Australian Parliamentary and Government Reports*, and those of the Northern Territory Government Resident.

<sup>13</sup> A. Searcy, *In Northern Seas*, Adelaide 1905, reprinted from the *Register* newspaper (South Australia).

Another volume by Searcy, *In Australian Tropics* (London 1907), presents the same data, with certain additional remarks that refer mainly to other parts of the Northern Territory. A third volume, *By Flood and Field* (Melbourne 1911), contains what purport to be personal reminiscences: thus Searcy tells how he was shipwrecked off the coast of western Arnhem Land, witnessed a Malay massacre, and lived some time (pp. 15-39) with local Aborigines. However, some of the experiences he relates appear in semi-fictional guise, and do not conform with earlier accounts given by himself and other (official) sources. Thus his description of the "Cape Brogden massacre" (see later) seems to be out of chronological order, and he states also that he himself was present at the time. For that reason, we have quoted only sparingly from this volume. However, *In Northern Seas* is his first publication and is more fully documented, and more references have therefore been cited from it.

<sup>14</sup> For example, T. T. Webb, *Spears to Spades*, 1938, and W. S. Chasing, *Children of Arnhem Land*, 1939. *Vide* also Methodist Overseas Mission and Church Missionary Society journals for information relating to their activities.

<sup>15</sup> W. L. Warner, *A Black Civilisation*, New York, 1937.

<sup>16</sup> Chiefly in the form of Government Reports: *vide Report on Expedition to Arnhem Land*, 1936-37, Northern Territory of Australia 1939; *Recommendations of Policy in Native Affairs in the Northern Territory of Australia*, 1937-38; *Interim General Report of Preliminary Expedition to Arnhem Land, Northern Territory of Australia*, 1935-36, Department of the Interior, Canberra, 1936; and *Report of the Administration of the Northern Territory for Year 1944-45*, Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1946-47. See also D. Thomson, *Economic Structure and the Ceremonial Exchange Cycle in Arnhem Land*, Melbourne 1949, pp. 1-106, also in *Man*, Vol. LII, 1952, pp. 1-5.

<sup>17</sup> B. Spencer, *Native Tribes of the Northern Territory*, 1914, and *Wanderings in Wild Australia*, 2 vols. 1928.

<sup>18</sup> Professor A. P. Elkin has worked in south-western Arnhem Land, having headed several expeditions of which the personnel included photographers and sound recorders, as well as other workers in allied fields. The American-Australian Expedition to Arnhem Land was led by Mr C. P. Mountford and Dr Frank Setzler, and numbered among its members Mr

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F. D. McCarthy; none of their anthropological results have to date (1952) been published. In 1952 Dr Waterman and his wife are investigating Aboriginal music at Yirrkalla, in north-eastern Arnhem Land.

Dr A. E. Capell of the Department of Anthropology, Sydney University, has carried out linguistic work in this region: see, for example, *The Classification of Languages in North and North-West Australia*, *Oceania*, Vol. X, No. 3, and Vol. X, No. 4; and *Languages of Arnhem Land, North Australia*, *Oceania*, Vol. XII, No. 4, and Vol. XIII, No. 1.

For publications on Arnhem Land see R. and C. Berndt, *Sacred Figures of Arnhem Land*, *Oceania*, Vol. XVIII, No. 4, pp. 309-26; *Carved Secular Human Figures of North-East Arnhem Land*, *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 51, No. 2, pp. 213-222; *Discovery of Pottery in North Eastern Arnhem Land*, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, Vol. LXXVII, Part 2, 1947 (pub. 1951), pp. 133-138; C. and R. Berndt, *An Oenpelli Monologue: Culture Contact*, *Oceania*, Vol. XXII, pp. 24-52; R. Berndt, *A Wonguri-Mandjikai Song Cycle of the Moon Bone*, *Oceania*, Vol. XIX, No. 1, pp. 16-50; *Badu, Islands of the Spirits*, *Oceania*, Vol. XIX, No. 2, pp. 93-103; *Ceremonial Exchange in Western Arnhem Land*, *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 7, No. 2, pp. 156-176; C. Berndt, *Expressions of Grief Among Aboriginal Women*, *Oceania*, Vol. XX, No. 4, pp. 286-332; *A Drama of North-Eastern Arnhem Land*, *Oceania*, Vol. XXII, Nos. 3 and 4. Many other articles are scattered through anthropological journals. Volumes: A. P. Elkin, R. and C. Berndt, *Art in Arnhem Land*, Melbourne and University of Chicago Press, 1950; R. and C. Berndt, *Sexual Behaviour in Western Arnhem Land* (Viking Fund Publications in Anthropology, No. 16) New York, 1951, pp. 1-247; R. Berndt, *Kunapipi*, Melbourne and International Universities Press, New York, 1951; *Djanggarwul*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1952, and *Love Songs of Arnhem Land* (for publication); C. Berndt, *Married Life in An Australian Tribe* (for publication). See also W. E. Harney and A. P. Elkin, *Songs of the Songmen*, Melbourne 1949.

## CHAPTER 2

<sup>1</sup> The reader who is particularly interested in the social organisation and kinship terminology of the eastern and western Arnhem Land people is referred to the following works:

For western Arnhem Land, see A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, *The Social Organisation of Australian Tribes*, *Oceania*, Vol. I, No. 3, pp. 330-31 (and also *Oceania Monograph* No. 1, 1930); R. and C. Berndt, *Sexual Behaviour in Western Arnhem Land*, pp. 69-78; A. P. Elkin, R. and C. Berndt, *Social Organisation of Arnhem Land*, 1. Western Arnhem Land, *Oceania*, Vol. XXI, No. 4, pp. 253-301.

For eastern Arnhem Land, see L. Warner, *A Black Civilisation*, pp. 3-124, and Morphology and Functions of the Australian Murngin Type of Kinship, *American Anthropologist*, n.s., 33, 2; T. T. Webb, *Tribal Organisation*

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in Eastern Arnhem Land, *Oceania*, Vol. III, No. 4, pp. 406-411; A. P. Elkin, Marriage and Descent in East Arnhem Land, *Oceania*, Vol. III, No. 4, pp. 412-416; D. Thomson, *Interim General Report of Preliminary Expedition to Arnhem Land, Northern Territory of Australia*, 1935-36, Department of the Interior, Canberra, 1936, pp. 31-34; W. E. Lawrence and G. P. Murdock, Murngin Social Organisation, *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 51, No. 1, pp. 58-65; A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, Murngin Social Organisation, *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 53, No. 1, pp. 37-55; A. P. Elkin, R. and C. Berndt, Social Organisation of Arnhem Land, 2. North-Central Arnhem Land, *Oceania*; R. Berndt, *Kunapipi*, pp. 2-6, and *Love Songs of Arnhem Land*.

For Arnhem Land generally, see A. P. Elkin, The Complexity of Social Organisation in Arnhem Land, *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 6, No. 1, pp. 3-16.

For general references: see A. P. Elkin, *The Australian Aborigines*, Sydney 1938, and Kinship in South Australia, *Oceania Bound Reprint*, Sydney 1940; P. Kaberry, *Aboriginal Woman*, London 1939; R. and C. Berndt, A Preliminary Report of Field Work in the Ooldea Region, Western South Australia, *Oceania Bound Reprint*, Sydney 1945, pp. 1-343; *From Black to White in South Australia*, Melbourne and University of Chicago Press, 1951; *The First Australians*, Sydney 1952; C. Berndt, *Women's Changing Ceremonies in Northern Australia*, L'Homme, No. 1, Paris 1950.

<sup>2</sup> The reader is referred to *Art in Arnhem Land* by A. P. Elkin, R. and C. Berndt, which concerns a brief survey of particular art forms and their sociological significance in the region under discussion.

## CHAPTER 3

<sup>1</sup> The most important references in literature concerning this contact are found in M. Flinders, *op. cit.* pp. 172 *et seq.*; A. Searcy, *op. cit.* pp. 5-11, 39-42; L. Warner, *op. cit.* pp. 451-471 and N. B. Tindale, The Natives of Groote Eylandt and the West Coast of the Gulf of Carpentaria, *Records of the South Australian Museum*, Vol. III, No. 2, 1926.

Professor Lloyd Warner underestimates the influence of Malay and Macassan contact on the indigenous Aboriginal cultures of Arnhem Land.

A certain amount of documentary evidence dealing with the last phase of Macassan contact is to be found in the South Australian Archives.

<sup>2</sup> Aborigines say that these imported fowls were the progenitors of the modern jungle-fowl, but this seems unlikely.

<sup>3</sup> *Vide* L. Warner, *op. cit.* pp. 456-458, for a brief sketch of the economic organisation of the Malay traders.

<sup>4</sup> R. and C. Berndt, Card Games Among Aborigines of the Northern Territory, *Oceania*, Vol. XVII, No. 3, p. 249.

<sup>5</sup> A. P. Elkin, R. and C. Berndt, *op. cit.*, p. 94.

<sup>6</sup> Vide R. and C. Berndt, Carved (Secular) Human figures of North-East Arnhem Land, *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 51, No. 2; and also A. P. Elkin, R. and C. Berndt, *Art in Arnhem Land*.

<sup>7</sup> Re notes by Dr Held and Professor Cense (University of Indonesia): communication and conversation with the former. Vide R. and C. Berndt, *Sexual Behaviour in Western Arnhem Land*, pp. 38-45.

<sup>8</sup> E.g., L. Warner, *op. cit.* p. 467.

<sup>9</sup> Vide L. Warner, *op. cit.* p. 457.

<sup>10</sup> Vide Report by Dr Strangman, who made a medical survey along the north and east coast of Arnhem Land in 1908, one year after the Indonesian traders ceased to visit these shores. (175/1908, Report on Condition of Aborigines, *Northern Territory Incoming Correspondence*, South Australian Archives.) This subject has been discussed briefly in *Sexual Behaviour in Western Arnhem Land* (R. and C. Berndt), pp. 43-45, where reference is made to the introduction of venereal disease into western Arnhem Land.

Dr Strangman examined eastern Arnhem Land Aborigines at Caledon Bay, Blue Mud Bay and Cape Shields, and found no evidence of venereal disease. On Groote Eylandt he "could see little evidence of venereal or other disease; a few natives had genital or inguinal sores covered with soft granulation tissue which projected above the skin surface (pseudo granulomata)". "These growths", he adds, "are either a local infection or the result of broken down inguinal glands, which have a tendency to heal spontaneously with improved health when the affected natives migrate to better country with abundant food".

<sup>11</sup> M. Flinders, *op. cit.* pp. 228-233.

<sup>12</sup> E.g., A. Grenfell-Price, The History and Problems of the Northern Territory, *The John Murtagh Macrossan Lectures*, 1930, Adelaide 1930, p. 2.

<sup>13</sup> Vide R. Berndt, Badu, Islands of the Spirits, *Oceania*, Vol. XIX, No. 2, pp. 93-103, and A. P. Elkin, R. and C. Berndt, *Art in Arnhem Land*.

<sup>14</sup> Vide P. P. King, *Narrative of a Survey of the Intertropical and Western Coasts of Australia, etc.*, London 1826; T. B. Wilson, *Narrative of a Voyage Round the World, etc.*, London 1835; G. W. Earl, Notes on Northern Australia and Neighbouring Seas, *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, 1837, Vol. XII, pp. 139-41; G. W. Earl, *Enterprise in Tropical Australia*, London 1846; J. L. Stokes, *Discoveries in Australia, with an account of the coasts and rivers explored and surveyed during the voyage of H.M.S. Beagle . . .* London 1846; A. C. Gregory, North Australian Expedition, *South Australian Parliamentary Paper* No. 170 of 1861; E. A. Oppen, *A Description of the Northern Territory of South Australia*, 1864; F. Carrington, The Rivers of the Northern Territory, *Proclamation of the Royal Geographical Society of Australia (South Australian Branch)*, 1886-87, pp. 55-76; D. Lindsay, An Expedition Across Australia . . . *Journal* 1886-87, pp. 55-76; D. Lindsay, An Expedition Across Australia . . . *Journal*

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*of the Royal Geographical Society, London* 1889, Vol. XI, p. 650; D. Lindsay, *Explorations in the Northern Territory, Proclamation of the Royal Geographical Society of Australia (South Australian Branch)*, 1887-8, pp. 1-16; *National Association to Federalise the Northern Territory*, Melbourne 1901, pp. 1-40. See also *South Australian Parliamentary Papers*, Cadell, Nos. 178 of 1867, 24, 79 and 79A of 1868-9; D. Lindsay, No. 239 of 1883-4; H.M.S. Beatrice, Nos. 18 of 1865, 84 of 1865-66 and 79 of 1866-7; Carrington, 1884-6 (Government Residents' Reports); T. Gill, *Bibliography of the Northern Territory of South Australia*, Adelaide, 1905 and 1912; A. Searcy, *In Northern Seas*, Adelaide 1905; A. Grenfell-Price, *op. cit.* pp. 1-28 and 59-67 (notes and references).

<sup>15</sup> *Vide* A. Searcy, *op. cit.*, various references; *Incoming and Outgoing Correspondence of the Northern Territory Administration*, South Australian Archives.

<sup>16</sup> *Vide* A. Searcy, *op. cit.*, and *Incoming and Outgoing Correspondence of the Northern Territory Administration*, S.A. Archives, e.g., 64 of 1905, etc.

<sup>17</sup> D. Thomson, *Report on Expedition to Arnhem Land*, 1936-37, Commonwealth of Australia, 1939, Appendix I, p. 21, mentions the police at Caledon Bay. The incident referred to in the above text, however, occurred earlier.

<sup>18</sup> *Vide* I. L. Idriess, *Man Tracks*, pp. 222-283: much of this information is not fully accurate; also W. E. Harney, *North of 23°*, pp. 110-177. Mr Harney was himself a trepanger just prior to the 1930's.

<sup>19</sup> *Vide* D. Thomson, *Report of Expedition to Arnhem Land*, 1936-37, Commonwealth of Australia, 1939, pp. 1-23. See reference to general unrest, Appendix III, p. 23. This writer states that, "Owing to the influence of outside contacts to which these natives have been repeatedly subjected recently, there is at the present time a great deal of unrest among the tribes of Arnhem Land . . ." See his *Interim General Report of Preliminary Expedition to Arnhem Land, Northern Territory of Australia*, 1935-36, Department of Interior, Canberra 1936 (see p. 15 referring to Woodah Island murder and Macassan contact).

<sup>20</sup> This had been proclaimed an inviolable Commonwealth Aboriginal Reserve in 1931.

<sup>21</sup> See particularly D. Thomson, *Report on Expedition to Arnhem Land*, 1936-37, Commonwealth of Australia, 1939, pp. 14-15. This contains almost the only reliable published information on Japanese contact with natives during this period, with the exception of certain other Government Reports. L. Warner, *op. cit.* pp. 468 notes only that Japanese contact occurs.

<sup>22</sup> *Vide Darwin Drama*, by Owen Griffiths (1947).

<sup>23</sup> There seems to have been a genuine feeling of respect and liking for

the Indonesians generally, and today their bad points are overlooked and the old days romanticised.

Dr Thomson (in *Recommendations of Policy in Native Affairs in the Northern Territory of Australia*, Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1937-38, p. 7) states: "Not only had the Malay or Macassar influence among these people extended over a very long period, but that these early voyagers who visited the North Australian coast each year with the north-west monsoon, were able to work with the natives of the Arnhem Land coast, to exert a profound influence upon their culture, which remains today, and to leave behind them a tradition of respect which the white man has unhappily not been able to inspire in his subsequent dealings with these people".

<sup>24</sup> Dr Thomson (*Report on Expedition to Arnhem Land, 1936-37*, Commonwealth of Australia, 1939, p. 12) has something to say on one aspect of this subject: "But an example of the danger of interference by strangers and the complications that may arise from ignorance of customary behaviour, was brought to my notice when a man in coming to me with a complaint about the Japanese invaders on the reserve told me that they knew no shame, for not only did they openly solicit women, but they solicited a woman in the presence of her brother. This is an incomprehensible thing to a native, the penalty for which would be death—although in the native society itself it is inconceivable that such a thing ever could occur".

*Vide L. Warner, op. cit. p. 467.*

<sup>25</sup> This conventionalised segregation of the sexes at Groote Eylandt, in the old pre-Mission days, is associated with the Spirit Woman Wuratilagu. She also made an appearance on the mainland, but her cult did not flourish there. However, she has been accepted and identified with another female spirit, and today is the subject of a long song cycle.

<sup>26</sup> Professor Warner (*op. cit. p. 468*) insists that (in 1926-29) alien contact made little impression on indigenous life. One must remember that most of his field work was carried out in the Milingimbi region and not in the north-eastern corner, centred about Yirrkalla, where there was then no Mission station. Even so, it is difficult to understand such statements as these: "It is surprising to the investigator to find little evidence of miscegenation among the blacks and Malays in north-east Arnhem Land". And "since the rapacious civilisation of the West cannot produce half-castes in this region, it is less probable that the more gentle Malay culture would produce racial hybrids in North Australia". "The influence of the Malay race and culture has not been important in north-eastern Arnhem Land. There are but slight traces of hybridisation in race or culture. The greatest influence is found in the material culture, and the least in the social institutions of Murngin (a term which Professor Warner uses for these people) civilisation. Compared with the total number of traits found in Aboriginal culture, those added from the more eastern civilisation are very

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few indeed and, with the exception of the dugout (canoe) complex, have had no significant influence on the development of Murngin civilisation. On the other hand, when an examination is made of the even larger number of traits found in Malay culture, and they are contrasted with the very few adopted by the Murngin from the Malays, it becomes even further demonstrable that Murngin civilisation remained very near to what it was before the Malay arrived, and that the Malay gave little of his own civilisation to Aboriginal Australia". Just how Professor Warner arrived at this conclusion, with so much evidence pointing in the opposite direction, is beside the point in this study; and we shall not linger here in discussion of his statements.

<sup>27</sup> No cases were mentioned by Dr Strangman (*op. cit.*), nor directly from this area by Dr Thomson. The latter mentions the danger of the introduction of such diseases from the East (by Japanese), but not specifically their occurrence in this region. (*Vide Report on Expedition to Arnhem Land, 1936-37, Commonwealth of Australia, 1939, p. 15 and p. 16.*) See also R. and C. Berndt, *Sexual Behaviour in Western Arnhem Land*.

<sup>28</sup> There is, of course, the incidence of leprosy, yaws, tropical ulcers, etc., and the prevalence of such epidemics as measles, whooping cough, influenza, common colds and so on. The Aborigines have little or no immunity to such introduced diseases. (See also Thomson, *op. cit.* pp. 16-17.)

<sup>29</sup> *Vide* R. and C. Berndt, *Native Labour and Welfare in the Northern Territory*, duplicated manuscript for private distribution, Sydney 1946, pp. 68-71, 92-98, 100-102, 153-165, and 289-294.

<sup>30</sup> *Vide* L. Warner, *op. cit.* pp. 155-190. Professor Warner mentions (pp. 155-6), "... polygyny is possible under present conditions only because of warfare, and the resultant scarcity of women". The first part of this statement holds good for north-eastern Arnhem Land; but in the region from Arnhem Bay to Blue Mud Bay it was chiefly the male population which diminished as a result of warfare. Only occasionally were women speared. A detailed study of depopulation in relation to warfare, and its bearing on family life and sexual behaviour will be given later: see, for example, R. Berndt, *Love Songs of Arnhem Land*.

Dr Thomson (*Interim General Report of Preliminary Expedition to Arnhem Land, Northern Territory of Australia, 1935-36, Department of Interior, Canberra, 1936, pp. 42-44, and Report on Expedition to Arnhem Land, 1936-37, Commonwealth of Australia, 1939, pp. 6-15, 16 and 18*) has mentioned the subject of depopulation in this region. His contention is that alien contact (principally Japanese and European), the breaking down of traditional ways, and the collapse of clan structure, together with introduced epidemics, have diminished the native population of this region.

## CHAPTER 4

<sup>1</sup> An account of acculturation in this region has already been presented in *Sexual Behaviour in Western Arnhem Land* (R. and C. Berndt), pp. 38-45.

<sup>2</sup> *Vide* Carl Warburton, *Buffalo Trail*; B. Spencer, *Native Tribes of Northern Territory*, 1914, pp. viii-ix; and A. Searcy, *In Northern Seas*, Adelaide 1905; see also E. R. Masson, *An Untamed Territory*, London 1915.

<sup>3</sup> The water-buffalo is not indigenous to the country. It was originally imported from Timor and the East Indies, and left to roam at large when the old settlements of Fort Dundas (on Melville Island), Raffles Bay and Port Essington (on the mainland) were abandoned. See A. Searcy, *op. cit.* pp. 13-15, and C. Warburton, *op. cit.*

<sup>4</sup> *Vide* A. Searcy, *op. cit.* pp. 43-47. A military settlement was attempted at Raffles Bay in 1827, and then at Port Essington (abandoned in 1849). Fort Dundas (now Garden Point) on Melville Island had been established under an unpractical military rule in 1824 and abandoned in 1829.

<sup>5</sup> B. Spencer, *op. cit.* p. viii.

<sup>6</sup> Melville, Bathurst, Croker and Goulburn Islanders were also used as "crew boys" (as they are today on the Government Patrol vessel and Mission luggers) by white traders around the Arnhem Land coast to Groote Eylandt, Borroloola and the Vanderlins (Sir Edward Pellew Islands), and to Thursday Island.

See also the following: D. Thomson, *Report of Expedition to Arnhem Land*, 1936-37, Commonwealth of Australia, 1939, p. 14; kidnapping of natives from Port Essington by Captain Cadell, *Outgoing Northern Territory Letters*, 400/1878; natives picked up for the Government voyage around the north coast, *Northern Territory Incoming Correspondence*, 175/1908; natives taken from Goulburn Island, *ibid*, 616/1881; *ibid*, 703/1881. Numerous other examples may be cited.

<sup>7</sup> The Japanese were not the only people who supplied the natives in this and adjacent regions with intoxicating liquor. The Macassans and Malayans before them had developed the natives' liking for this stimulant; and quantities of it, together with opium, were supplied by European settlers, buffalo shooters and Chinese. In fact, it has been said (prior to World War II, and even in recent years) that the only way to keep native employees in the buffalo camp area is to supply them with drink; and employers who do this declare that intoxicants increase the Aborigines' working capacity.

<sup>8</sup> *Vide Native Employment and Welfare in the Northern Territory*, R. and C. Berndt; also Special Survey of Army Controlled Settlements in the Northern Territory, 1945-46 (unpublished report).

<sup>9</sup> L. Warner, *op. cit.* p. 467, discussing the more easterly people of Arnhem Land, says that "All the blacks in this whole area speak very highly of

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the Malay traders, for they always mention first their generosity and immediately after this they say, 'They let our women alone'. In the same breath they will tell a white man whom they consider to be their friend that the white and Japanese traders are 'no good' because they are stingy in their trade and are always trying to rape their women". However, other local authorities state that the Malays introduced venereal diseases, e.g., *Incoming Northern Territory Correspondence*, C. E. Gore, 461/1903, who states, "Another thing is the Malays spread the venereal disease all along the coast and shortly after the proas come it's no uncommon thing to see five or six men and women in a camp rotten. I saw three die on Croker Island last year, and young women too". Or, *ibid*, 552/1882, from the Government Resident to Minister of Education, Adelaide, "... inland tribes of natives come down to the coast every season to visit the Malays . . . by the prostitution of their women, obtain large quantities of grog and tobacco". "... almost as great an evil as the drink is the disease the Malays spread among the natives; the captain of one proa informed me that nearly all his men were suffering from venereal disease, and I can assure you the natives are in a pitiable condition. . . ."

<sup>10</sup> *Vide* D. Thomson, *Report on Expedition to Arnhem Land*, 1936-37, Commonwealth of Australia, 1939, pp. 14-15 who states, ". . . the invasion of the reserves in 1936-37 by Japanese trepangers had had a profound effect that has extended throughout the reserve. . . . Throughout 1937 the steadily growing number of Japanese-manned pearl fishing vessels in the waters of the reserve was a most potent factor in the growing unrest that was becoming steadily more serious each month (see Chapters 3, 15-17) . . . in May 1936-37 . . . at a conservative estimate there were perhaps 700 Japanese on the Arnhem Land coast at this time. . . . The normal activities of the natives were entirely suspended in many areas, the native population abandoned all their normal activities and congregated at various rendezvous to wait for the return of the boats and the orgy that they grew to expect. At Cape Stewart and at the King River particularly, the prostitution of women, including little girls, became the regular custom and a state of affairs inconceivable under Australian law was established and persisted almost unchecked . . . women and children prostituted, and serious friction occurred between the natives and Japanese in which weapons were flourished and fighting only narrowly averted. An important aspect of this situation is the obvious danger of the introduction of diseases which, I understand, were actually epidemic in the East during this period . . ."

<sup>11</sup> An interesting report by Dr Cecil L. Strangman, Protector of Aborigines, mentions incidentally venereal disease in relation to natives along the North coast of the Northern Territory; it was published in the *Adelaide Register* (for 16-4-1908). The manuscript itself is more detailed. (*Incoming Correspondence of the Northern Territory*, 175/1908, July 1908).

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<sup>12</sup> *Vide* A. Searcy, op. cit. p. 49, and D. Thomson, *Report on Expedition to Arnhem Land*, 1936-37, Commonwealth of Australia, 1939, p. 14; here there was much destruction of native life.

## CHAPTER 5

<sup>1</sup> A. R. Wallace, *The Malay Archipelago*, New York, 1869, p. 623.

<sup>2</sup> V. E. Hendershot and W. G. Shellabear, *A Dictionary of Standard Malay*, 1945, p. 132.

<sup>3</sup> J. H. Freese, *A Malay Manual* (Trubner's Language Manual), p. 114.

## CHAPTER 6

<sup>1</sup> A. R. Wallace, *The Malay Archipelago*, 1869, p. 605.

<sup>2</sup> Bugis were also well known during the last phase of Indonesian contact. For example, the word "Bugi" seems to have been generally used on the north coast of Australia to refer to "Malays"; *vide* J. M'Gillivray, *Narrative of the Voyage of H.M.S. "Rattlesnake" during the years 1846-50*, London 1852, vol. ii, pp. 141-146 (mentioning the "Bugis" at Raffles Bay); J. L. Stokes, *Discoveries in Australia, etc., during the Voyage of H.M.S. "Beagle" in the years 1837-43*, London 1846, vol. i, p. 388 (mentioning the "Bugis" at Port Essington). See also A. W. Howitt, *Native Tribes of South-East Australia*, London, 1904, pp. 10-11.

<sup>3</sup> In later years some Indonesian women, who were prostitutes, did accompany these traders on their journeys to the Australian mainland.

## CHAPTER 7

<sup>1</sup> Documentary evidence relating to this aspect is contained in the *Incoming Correspondence of the Northern Territory*, when this area was administered by the South Australian Government (this series is in the possession of the Archives Department of the South Australian Library); series recorded January and August 1948, R. and C. Berndt. See No. 330/1872, 5-8-72 from Government Resident to Commissioner of Crown Lands, Adelaide, where it is stated that "Provision should . . . be made to prevent the native fishermen (that is, the Macassans) compelling our aborigines to work for them or carrying them off the coast . . ."; 351/1878, 21-5-78, from Captain Cadell to Minister for Education, Adelaide, ". . . they make confirmed drunkards of the men they take away with them. . . . Proposing going to Macassar soon — in a separate communication I will ask the Government to empower me to claim and receive on board any stray Northern Territory natives for the purpose of returning them to the said Territory"; 83/1879, 23-12-78, from Cadell



Plate 14a: A lugger being unloaded at Elcho Island.

Plate 14b: Yirrkalla Mission Settlement.



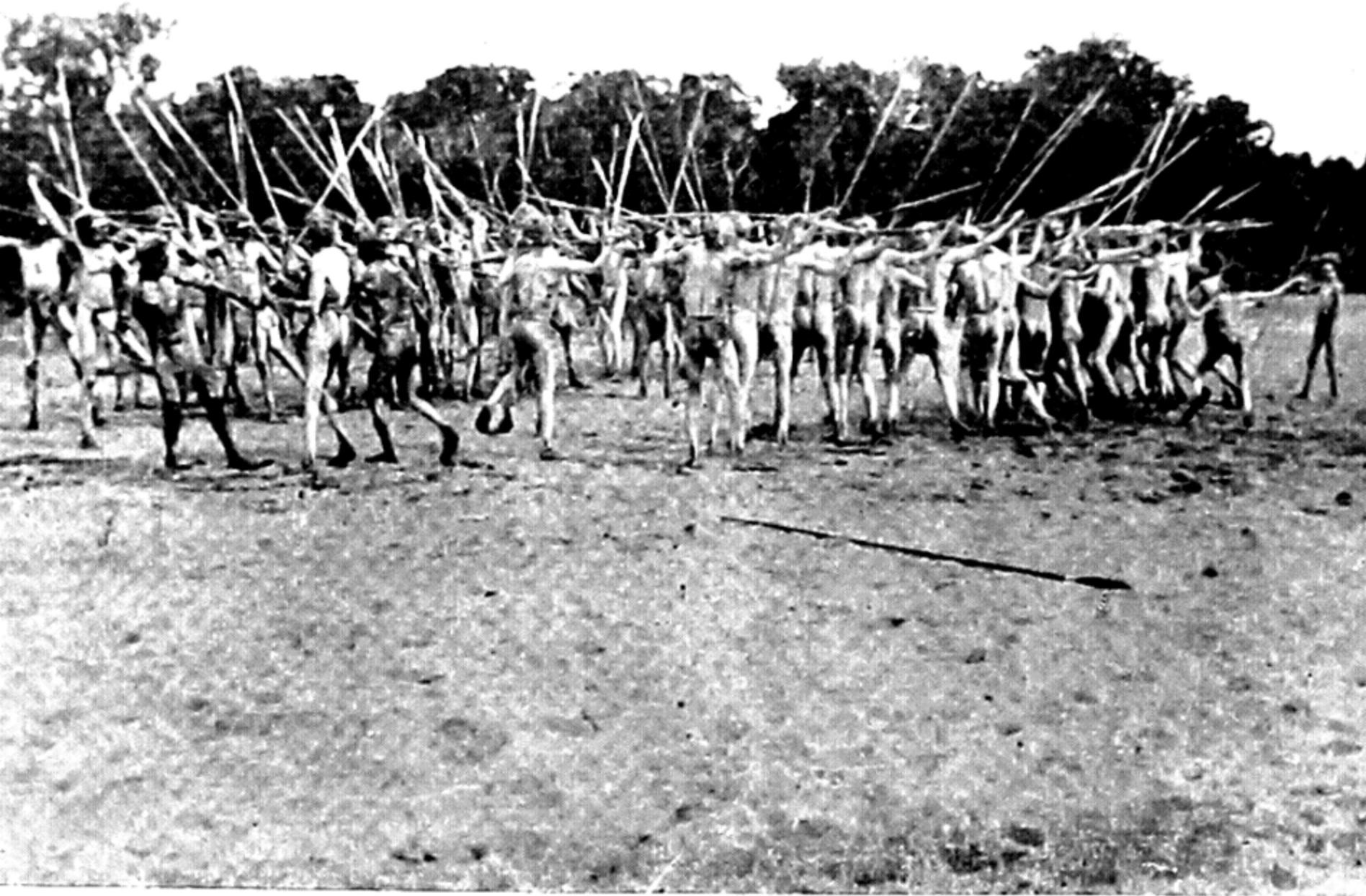


Plate 15a: A ritualized "peace-making" ceremony held at Yirrkalla.

Plate 15b: A canoe from "Badu," washed up at Yirrkalla.



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at Macassar to the Minister of Education, Adelaide, ". . . Numerous aboriginal Australians are to be found in Macassar as hewers of wood and drawers of water, but the authorities object to their joining the vessels of their fellow subjects"; 84/1879, 23-12-78, to Minister of Education from George Roel and others, Pearlers and Shipowners, Macassar, "Much of what Cadell says is true".

See also *Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines Bill*, 1899, South Australia, No. 77, Minutes of Evidence and Appendices, Adelaide 1899, p. 6 in which reference is made to Aboriginal women from the north coast being taken to Macassar by proas. L. Warner, *op. cit.* p. 458, has also stated that "Many of the black men went back to the Malay country with the returning fleets and stayed through the intervening season. There are a few cases of men who stayed permanently and married Malay women, but this was very rare".

<sup>2</sup> This man, Alfred Brown, was customs official at Bowen Strait.

<sup>3</sup> A. R. Wallace, *op. cit.* p. 484.

## CHAPTER 8

<sup>1</sup> A. R. Wallace, *op. cit.* p. 220.

<sup>2</sup> A. R. Wallace, *op. cit.* p. 408.

<sup>3</sup> This outline of the *wuramu* is elaborated in Carved (Secular) Figures of North-Eastern Arnhem Land, by R. and C. Berndt, *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 51, No. 2. It is also referred to in *Art in Arnhem Land*.

## CHAPTER 9

<sup>1</sup> Wallace, *op. cit.* p. 376. Various other references to the extent of Macassan trade are made in Wallace's book.

<sup>2</sup> A rather more detailed description of Badu has been given in an article entitled, Badu, Islands of the Spirits, by R. Berndt, *Oceania*, Vol. XIX, No. 2, pp. 93-103, i plate.

<sup>3</sup> It will be interesting, later on, to compare the details of "Badu" native life as set out in the "Badu" cycle with those mentioned by A. C. Haddon (that is, *Reports of the Cambridge Anthropological Expedition to Torres Straits*, Vol. I, etc. 1935; and *Head-Hunters, Black, White, and Brown*, 1932) in respect of the Torres Strait Islanders, and by J. Van Baal and P. Wirz (P. Wirz, *Die Marind-anim von Hollandisch-Sud-Neuguinea*, Hamburg, I, i, and ii, 1922; II, iii, and iv, 1925; and J. Van Baal, *Godsdienst en Samenleving in Nederlandsch-Zuid-Nieuw-Guinea*, Amsterdam, 1934) in relation to the Marind (South Netherlands New Guinea).

<sup>4</sup> A. C. Haddon etc., *op. cit.* 1935, e.g. p 18; A. C. Haddon, *op. cit.* 1932, pp. 22, 38, *et passim*; G. Peel, *Isles of the Torres Straits*, Sydney 1947, pp. 82-83, *et passim*.

<sup>5</sup> A. Searcy, *op. cit.*

## CHAPTER 10

<sup>1</sup> M. Flinders, *A Voyage to Terra Australis, etc.*, London 1814, 2 vols.

<sup>2</sup> L. Warner, *op. cit.* pp. 453-468.

<sup>3</sup> A. Searcy, *op. cit.* p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Reference should be made to P. P. King, *Narrative of a Survey of the Intertropical and Western Coasts of Australia, performed between the years 1818 and 1822*, London 1826, 2 vols.; Major Campbell (formerly commandant at Melville Island during the Fort Dundas settlement), *Geographical Memoir of Melville Island and Port Essington on the Cobourg Peninsula, Northern Australia, with some observations on the settlements which have been established on the North Coast of New Holland, etc.*, *Royal Geographical Society Journal*, vol. IV, London 1834; MacGillivray, *Narrative of the Voyage of H.M.S. Rattlesnake, etc., during the years 1846-50, etc.*, London 1852, 2 vols. See also the Annual Address of the President (Hon. John Lewis) to the Royal Geographical Society, *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia*, vol. 16 (1914-15). Much published material is available on the early settlements of Fort Dundas, Raffles Bay and Port Essington (*vide* Thomas Gill's *Bibliography of the Northern Territory of South Australia*), but little about the Indonesian traders.

Some interesting details are included in Major Campbell's account (mentioned above); he refers to Malay praus' coming from the Gulf of Carpentaria to Dundas Strait between Cobourg Peninsula and Melville Island: ". . . each prau is commanded by a chief (called a Nacodah), and to each of these vessels from three to five canoes are attached. . . . These praus are independent of each other, and the chief or master is not the owner, but merely acts for the proprietor who resides at Macassar. He is not permitted to dispose of the trepang during the voyage, but is obliged to return to Macassar with the whole produce of his fishing." And "a trepang curing establishment is formed every year in Port Essington, on Malay Point, and sometimes in Knocker's Bay. The buildings are of bamboo, which the Malays bring along with them, and remove when they quit the coast. . . . The Malays represent that they found the natives extremely troublesome and hostile all along the northern coast. . . . The Malays call this coast and native inhabitants 'Marega'; and the aborigines call the Malays 'Mulwadies'".

The statement referring to the natives' hostility was probably fabricated by the Malays in order to discourage European settlement further east along the Arnhem Land coast.

<sup>5</sup> G. W. Earl, *Observations on the Commercial and Agricultural Capabilities of the North Coast of New Holland and Advantages to be Derived from the Establishment of a Settlement in the vicinity of Raffles Bay*, London 1836.

<sup>6</sup> Vide W. B. Wildey, *Australasia and the Oceanic Region*, Melbourne 1876, p. 78.

## REFERENCES

<sup>7</sup> From Government Resident (Douglass) to Commissioner of Crown Lands, Adelaide, 330/1872, 5-8-72. Mention has been made before of this subject, so this writer says; but no records seem to be available concerning it. *N.T. Incoming Correspondence*.

<sup>8</sup> Steps were taken to have a Bill passed to grant the licences mentioned above, as well as to cover some of the other aspects noted. (1872).

<sup>9</sup> From Minister of Education, Adelaide, relative to inroads by Macassan natives on the north coast of Australia (A. 340/77, 17-12-77, letter dated 17-11-77, replying to Northern Territory letter, 435/77; *N.T. ibid.*).

<sup>10</sup> Correspondence about Captain Cadell, re Pearl and Trepang fishing, 351/1878, 21-5-78, *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> From Cadell at Macassar to Minister of Education, Adelaide, 83/1879, 23-12-78, *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> The Protector of Aborigines of the Northern Territory wrote in 1876 (38/1-11-76, *ibid.*) that Captain George W. Robinson of the ship "Kingston" had informed him there were some Australian natives at Macassar. There were about seventeen of these, he thought, mostly from Port Essington; Australian vessels were not permitted to take them away to fish for pearls until a deposit of 200 rupees per man had been paid. Captain McCrae of the "Arelia", a Western Australian vessel, had had five or six of these Australian Aborigines on a former expedition, but was not allowed to re-ship them except on these conditions. North-eastern or eastern Arnhem Landers at Macassar were not mentioned by these men.

<sup>13</sup> From D. A. Morgan, Port Essington, to the Government Resident, Darwin, on Malays visiting the coast: 19/78, 15-11-78, *ibid.* . .

<sup>14</sup> This report was made to the Government Resident on 16th June 1880 (20/1880, *ibid.*). It was attached to evidence concerning the murder of Wingfield on Croker Island, which had been brought about by Wingfield's supplying Aborigines with liquor.

<sup>15</sup> From Government Resident to Minister of Education, 346/1882, 13-4-82, *ibid.*: advisability of charging a licence for trepang fishing (letter from E. O. Robinson, who was evidently anxious to obtain the position).

<sup>16</sup> From Government Resident to Minister of Education, Adelaide, 552/1882, 3-8-82, *ibid.*, being a *Report* from the Inspector of Police relevant to Malay praus visiting the coast (original letter dated 2-8-82).

<sup>17</sup> *Vide* R. and C. Berndt, *Sexual Behaviour in Western Arnhem Land*.

<sup>18</sup> From Acting Consul for the Netherlands to the Minister of Education, Adelaide, 797/1883, 14-12-83, *ibid.*: the Consul replied to a complaint made by the Minister of Education, and stated that he would lay the matter before the Netherlands India Government.

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<sup>19</sup> *Quarterly Report on the Northern Territory*, No. 54 A/84, dated 28-12-83.

<sup>20</sup> A. Searcy, *op. cit.* pp. 7-9.

<sup>20a</sup> See also Searcy, *By Flood and Field*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>21</sup> A. Searcy, *In Northern Seas*, pp. 8-9, also *Quarterly Report on the Northern Territory*, dated 9-4-84.

<sup>22</sup> A. Searcy, *op. cit.* p. 9.

<sup>23</sup> A. Searcy, *op. cit.* pp. 7-9.

<sup>24</sup> A. Searcy, *op. cit.* p. 10.

<sup>25</sup> Government Resident, *Quarterly Report on the Northern Territory*, March 31st, 1885.

<sup>26</sup> A. Searcy, *op. cit.* p. 10.

<sup>27</sup> A. Searcy, *op. cit.* p. 11.

<sup>28</sup> Government Resident, *Half-Yearly Report on Northern Territory* to December 31st 1885, Appendix I. Customs Revenue.

<sup>29</sup> Government Resident, *Half-Yearly Report on Northern Territory* to December 31st, 1886, Appendices: Customs.

<sup>30</sup> Government Resident, *Report on Northern Territory for the Year 1887*, Appendices: Customs.

A list of praus is also appended here:

Prau	Master	Crew ..
Sakorinlong	Reimba	37
Samberic Djiema	Bangasing	20
Tjiema Mataya	Laba	30
Bonding Patola	Oesing	33
Samberie Sverega	Aha	36
Samberie Gadong	Roaing	23
Samalawaya	Halakalve	24
Bonding Monokokie	Moentoe	27
Pattie Djawaya	Matona	30
Samberie Sverie	Pveac Vando	32
Sabalatie	Maritja	27

<sup>31</sup> Government Resident, *Report on the Northern Territory for the year 1889*, Appendices: Customs.

## REFERENCES

Robinson gives a list of praus from which duty was collected, as follows:

<i>Prau</i>	<i>Master</i>	<i>Tonnage</i>	<i>Crew</i>
Lakarinlong	Reimba	17	36
Patti Djanaya	Bisboe	17	30
Lambere Gadong	Moentoe	17	33
Tjiemma Mataya	Noehang	16	35
Bonding Patola	Oesing	26	34
Bonding Monokokie	Daing Matona	18	28
Lambere Loerie	Haiang	15	25
Sabalasie	Amieng Oenana	15	28
Lambere Soeroega	Soeleman	21	30
Lambere Djima	Bang Rasing	13	28

<sup>32</sup> Government Resident, *Report on the Northern Territory for the year 1893*, Appendices: Customs.

<sup>33</sup> Government Resident, *Report on the Northern Territory for the year 1894*.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* Appendices: Customs.

<sup>35</sup> Government Resident, *Report on the Northern Territory for the year 1895*, Appendices: Customs.

<sup>36</sup> Government Resident, *Report on the Northern Territory for 1896*, Appendices: Macarthur River District, by Chas. W. Nash, S.M.

<sup>37</sup> Government Resident, *Report on the Northern Territory for 1897*, Appendices: Customs.

A list of these praus is appended:

<i>Prau</i>	<i>Master</i>	<i>Tonnage</i>	<i>Crew</i>
Lambere Kampong	Beefie Reimba	30-85	38
Boenga Enjaya	Oesing	21-17	40
Patiedjawaya	Soelman	16-37	37
Bonding Monnongokokie	Madya	18-75	32
Lambere Oedjoeing Tanah	Maritja	21-72	32
Bonding Maloko	Baba Bidolo	20-56	29

<sup>38</sup> From Sub-Collector of Customs, No. 7826, 27th Aug. 1897; and from Gouvernement Celebes en Onderhoorigheden, Afdeeling Secretarie, No. 124/3, Makassar, 8 Jan. '85. A list of vessels was enclosed, but is now missing from the file.

<sup>39</sup> Government Resident, *Report on the Northern Territory for 1899*, Appendices: Customs.

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In that year, reference was made to Malays on the north coast, during the meeting of the *Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines Bill*, 1899, Minutes of Evidence and Appendices (South Australia, No. 77 of 1899, Adelaide, 58-61).

<sup>40</sup> 461/1903, *Northern Territory Incoming Letters*.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Government Resident, *Report on the Northern Territory for the year 1893*, Appendices: Customs.

<sup>43</sup> 175/1908, Report on conditions of Aborigines; *ibid.*

<sup>43a</sup> *South Australian Register*, September 9th 1904; also quoted in preface of A. Searcy's book, *In Australian Tropics*, pp. vi-vii.

## CHAPTER 11

<sup>1</sup> Readers interested in this aspect should consult relevant works on early Australian history and discovery, and also Thomas Gill's *Bibliography of the Northern Territory of South Australia*, Adelaide 1903, with supplement to March 1912 by staff of the Adelaide Public Library.

<sup>2</sup> For example, see Major Campbell, *Geographical Memoir of Melville Island and Port Essington etc.*; *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, Vol. IV, London 1834; T. B. Wilson, *Narrative of a Voyage Round the World*, London 1835; G. W. Earl, *Observations on the Commercial and Agricultural Capabilities of the North Coast of New Holland*, etc., London 1836; G. W. Earl, *Enterprise in Tropical Australia*, London 1846; E. Home, *Report on Port Essington Settlement*, London 1845; J. L. Stokes, *Discoveries in Australia . . . during the voyage of the H.M.S. Beagle etc.*, London 1846; L. Leichhardt, *Journal of an Overland Expedition in Australia from Moreton to Port Essington etc.*, London 1847; J. MacGillivray, *Narrative of the Voyage of H.M.S. Rattlesnake etc.*, London 1852; E. A. Oppen, *A Description of the Northern Territory of South Australia*, 1864; Lieut. Douglas, *Official Report on the Northern Territory of South Australia*, 1871; L. D. Daly, *Digging, Squatting, and Pioneering Life in the Northern Territory of South Australia*, London 1887, and so on. A great deal of data on this aspect is to be found in the *South Australian Parliamentary Papers*, *South Australian Parliamentary Debates*, *Imperial Parliamentary Papers*, and the *Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia*: D. Howard, *The English Activities on the North Coast of Australia in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century*, London Bureau of Historical Research, 1924; *Historical Records of Australia*, Series I, Vols. XI-XVI, and Series III, Vol. V and VI.

Readers interested in this aspect are advised to refer also to A. Grenfell Price's "Notes and References" (pp. 59-67) in his pamphlet, *The History and Problems of the Northern Territory of Australia, The John Murtagh Macrossan Lecture for 1930*, Adelaide 1930.

## REFERENCES

*Vide also Address to the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (South Australian Branch): Delivered at the Anniversary Meeting, 29th October 1915, by Hon. John Lewis, Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (S.A. Branch), 28th Session, 1914, Adelaide 1915.*

In reference to contact in western Arnhem Land by early explorers, see the diaries of John McDougal Stuart of 1862 (reference is made to the Roper, Mary and Adelaide Rivers, and Van Diemen's Gulf) and John McKinlay of 1866 (for the Adelaide River and East Alligator). Summarised notes may be found in J. W. Bull's book *Early Experiences of Life in South Australia and An Extended Colonial History*, Adelaide 1884 (pp. 345-360 and 362-368 respectively).

<sup>3</sup> No. 30, 16-5-74, *Northern Territory Incoming Correspondence*, Lewis Cottingham's narrative of his trip.

<sup>4</sup> No. 14, 8-6-74, Correspondence relating to the proposed exploring expedition to Blue Mud Bay on the Gulf of Carpentaria. *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> No. 74 of 1876, to the Minister of Agriculture and Education, Adelaide: *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> No. 74 of 1876; *Ibid.*; journal from "Spence" (?), kept on behalf of himself and the Prospecting Party, to Scott, Government Resident, Darwin.

<sup>7</sup> 59/ April 28th 1875, Messrs. Walker, Marshall and Party's agreement with the Government Resident, Darwin: *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> No. 35, 21st October 1875, from P. T. Wilkinson to the Inspector of Police, Port Darwin, concerning the Walker prospecting party: *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> 28/1876, from J. M. Solomon and others, Adelaide, to the Minister of Agriculture and Education; *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> 81/1877, from the Government Resident, forwarding report of Protector of Aborigines: *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Captain Cadell, *South Australian Parliamentary Papers*, Nos. 178 of 1867, and 24, 79 and 79 A of 1866-9. No. 24 of 1868 has a map of north-eastern Arnhem Land showing Cadell's journeys; there are also several references to the contact of his party with local Aborigines. In 24 of 1868-9, Cadell advocated the establishment of the capital of the Northern Territory on the Liverpool River (between Goulburn Islands and Milngimbi).

<sup>12</sup> 351/1878, Correspondence about Captain Cadell, re pearl and trepang fishing; in *Northern Territory Incoming Correspondence*.

<sup>13</sup> 351/1878, *ibid.* Copy of extract from Captain Cadell's letter to S. Tomkinson, Adelaide.

<sup>14</sup> 21/1878, Minister of Education to Chief Secretary, for consideration of Cabinet. The Government Resident was asked for information on this subject, and Cabinet agreed with the Minister's statement. *Ibid.*

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<sup>15</sup> 616/1881 from Government Resident to Minister for Education, and 703/1881, from Government Resident (letter from Paul Foelsche) to Minister for Education. *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> D. Lindsay, *South Australian Parliamentary Paper*, No. 239 of 1883-4; An Expedition Across Australia from South to North between the Telegraph Line and the Queensland Boundary in 1885-6, *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*, London 1889, Vol. XI, p. 650; and Explorations in the Northern Territory, *Proclamation of the Royal Geographical Society, of Australasia*, (S.A. Branch), 1887-8, pp. 1-16.

<sup>17</sup> 166/1883 and 449/1883, *Northern Territory Incoming Correspondence*.

<sup>18</sup> *Exploration Map of South Australia and the Northern Territory*, September 1885, Goyder, Surveyor-General.

<sup>19</sup> 693/1883, 2nd Nov. 1883, David Lindsay, at Katherine, to Minister of Education: *Northern Territory Incoming Correspondence*.

<sup>20</sup> 47/1883 and 53/1883, *ibid.*: report of cruise of H.M.C. "Flying Cloud" to Port Essington. This was the trip mentioned by A. Searcy, *In Northern Seas*, in Chapter 3.

<sup>21</sup> 47/1884, from Robinson to Acting Government Resident, Darwin: *ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> 6/1884, from H. R. Marsh to McMinn, Acting Government Resident, Report of trip to Port Essington and Bowen Straits: *ibid.* Details are given here of the murder of two Chinese by the Alligator River Aborigines.

<sup>23</sup> 34/1885, from E. O. Robinson, *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> 1043/1885, *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Government Resident, *Half-Yearly Report on Northern Territory to December 31st 1885*, p. 3; also reference on p. 6.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6-11 and 952/1885, *Northern Territory Incoming Correspondence*.

<sup>27</sup> 1075/1885, *ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> 102/1886, from Captain Carrington to Government Resident: report on Blue Mud Bay, etc. *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> A. Searcy, *op. cit.*

<sup>30</sup> Government Resident, *Half-Yearly Report on Northern Territory to December 31st 1886*, p. 1.

<sup>31</sup> Government Resident, *Report on Northern Territory for the year 1887*, pp. 2-3.

<sup>32</sup> A. Searcy, *op. cit.* p. 49.

<sup>33</sup> Government Resident, *Report on Northern Territory for the year 1890*, p. 4.

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- <sup>34</sup> Government Resident, *Report on Northern Territory for the year 1903*, p. 1.
- <sup>35</sup> Government Resident, *Report on the Northern Territory for the year 1903*, p. 1, and Appendices: Stock (p. 20).
- <sup>36</sup> 26/1893, from L. S. O'Flaherty, No. 5869, who was Protector of Aborigines: *ibid.*
- <sup>37</sup> Government Resident, *Report on the Northern Territory for the year 1894*, p. 8.
- <sup>38</sup> No. 6875, 15 April 1896. A diary of the "Red Gauntlet's" trip is still in existence, but is now in bad condition and almost crumbling away. The crew consisted of G. W. Phillips, the master D. Darroch, the mate, H. J. Kelly, supercargo, two Manilla men, two Cinghalese, one Siamese, one Javanese, and two natives of Singapore. *Ibid.*
- <sup>39</sup> 50/1900, *Northern Territory Incoming Correspondence*. In this year, two special mining permits were issued for country near Blue Mud Bay, on the eastern coast. Government Resident, *Report on the Northern Territory for the year 1900*, p. 7.
- <sup>40</sup> 64/1905, 3rd, 7th and 9th of May 1905, *Northern Territory Incoming Correspondence*; also published in *Adelaide Register* of 18 December 1905.
- <sup>41</sup> 175/1908, Dr Strangman's report on conditions of Aborigines: *Ibid.*
- <sup>42</sup> Dr G. White, in his book *Thirty Years in Tropical Australia* (London 1918), pp. 141-147, mentions his visit to Groote Eylandt in 1907 in order to find a site for a Mission station on the Roper River.
- <sup>43</sup> *Vide* I. Idriess, *Man Tracks*, Sydney 1936, pp. 222-3.
- <sup>44</sup> Idriess perpetuates this inaccuracy in his book (*op. cit.* pp. 222-3). In fact, he draws on his imagination to declare, in true melodramatic style, that "at the head of her braves she has harried tribes antagonistic to her wild ambitions. . . ." His remarks concerning this harmless woman are quite misleading.
- <sup>45</sup> H. Wilkins, *Undiscovered Australia*, London 1928, p. 130. D. Thomson (*Report on Expedition to Arnhem Land, 1936-37*, Commonwealth of Australia, 1939, Appendix I, p. 21) refers to Constables Bridgeland and MacNamara at Caledon Bay. Apparently they landed at Elcho Island from the "Huddersfield" and went overland to Caledon Bay.
- <sup>45a</sup> H. Wilkins, *op. cit.* pp. 214-6, 259-60.
- <sup>46</sup> *Groote Eylandt Mission Records*, obtained 1946. Dr Thomson (in *Report on Expedition to Arnhem Land, 1936-37*, Commonwealth of Australia, 1939, pp. 17-18) mentions this story. In September 1937 strong rumours were still prevalent regarding the white women survivors of the "Douglas Mawson", said to be in the vicinity of Woodah Island. Dr Thomson notified the Administration that they could discount with confidence any rumours relating to the existence of such women.

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C. Barrett (in his book *Coast of Adventure*, Melbourne 1941) mentions this myth (pp. 120-1). Wreckage was found at the foot of Cape Arnhem cliffs and near Bradshaw inlet, by Wilkins' expedition (of 1925); and Caledon Bay natives volunteered to guide Sir Hubert Wilkins to the ashes of the white women, declaring that they had been speared and their bodies burned. This information was passed on to the two policemen who, with their blacktrackers, were then camped at Caledon Bay.

<sup>47</sup> D. Thomson (*Report on Expedition to Arnhem Land, 1936-37*, Commonwealth of Australia, 1939, pp. 14-15, etc.) mentions the presence of intruders in the Arnhem Land Reserve. He comments on F. Gray's position (pp. 14 and 21), and the trouble which arose in his camp. Gray stated in a report to Milingimbi Mission (which was handed on to Thomson) that natives planned to attack his boat and kill his party, and that he had found it necessary to retire.

On p.19 of Thomson's *Report* (*op. cit.*) he mentions the presence of a trepanger named Ladd, east of the King River. Ladd's dépôt had been left in charge of a South Sea Island native named Willy Rotuma.

<sup>48</sup> *Vide* W. E. Harney, *North of 23°*, pp. 172-5.

<sup>49</sup> For mention of Harney's beachcombing days, see his book, *op. cit.* pp. 110-177.

<sup>50</sup> *Groote Eylandt Mission Journal*, 1925. See also H. Wilkins, *op. cit.*, pp. 237-241.

<sup>51</sup> *Groote Eylandt Mission Journal*.

<sup>52</sup> *Vide* W. E. Harney, *op. cit.* p. 114; also H. Wilkins, *op. cit.* pp. 130-31.

<sup>53</sup> *Groote Eylandt Mission Journal*.

<sup>54</sup> The Arnhem Native, from the *Northern Standard*, Darwin, 22 December 1933, the article being written by "Orangblander". To one who has heard the above sentiments repeated often, capped with the final quotation, it is not difficult to guess the real name of the author.

## CHAPTER 12

<sup>1</sup> A. Searcy, *In Northern Seas*, p. 9.

<sup>2</sup> A. Searcy, *op. cit.* p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> A. Searcy, *op. cit.* p. 10; see Chapter 10.

<sup>4</sup> A. Searcy, *op. cit.* pp. 39-40, and *In Australian Tropics*, pp. 182-184; see also Government Resident, *Report on Northern Territory for the year 1888*, Appendices: Customs.

<sup>5</sup> *Vide* Searcy, *In Northern Seas*, pp. 40-42; 313/1897, from Government

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Resident, "Petitions from Aboriginal Prisoners for remission of sentence"; 152/1900, *Northern Territory Incoming Correspondence*.

<sup>6</sup> 313/1897, *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> 152/1900, *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> 220/1902, *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER 13

<sup>1</sup> *Vide M. Flinders, Voyage to Terra Australis.*

<sup>2</sup> *Vide D. Thomson, Interim General Report of Preliminary Expedition to Arnhem Land, Northern Territory of Australia, 1935-36, Department of Interior, Canberra, 1936, p. 15.*

<sup>3</sup> A. Searcy, *op. cit.* p. 47.

<sup>4</sup> 1/1800, 1 January 1880, from the Government Resident to the Minister of Education: *Northern Territory Incoming Correspondence*.

<sup>5</sup> 20/1880, 16 June 1880, from Inspector of Police to Price, Government Resident: Reports re murder of Thomas Howard Wingfield; 371/1880, 17 June 1880, from Government Resident to Minister of Education, Adelaide; *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> 20/1880, from Minister of Education to Government Resident; *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> 29/1875, from G. McMinn, Senior Surveyor to Government Resident, 10 March 1875; *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> 32/1875, Captain Henry R. Marsh's report of trip to Port Essington in the "Flying Cloud", to land the Mt. Tor expedition in search of Messrs. Permain and Borrodaile: to Scott, Government Resident, Darwin: *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> 497/1898, Government Resident to the Minister Controlling the Northern Territory: *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> Government Resident, *Report for the Northern Territory, 1898*, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> E. R. Masson, *An Untamed Territory*, London 1915, pp. 160-178.

<sup>12</sup> That is, the *Northern Territory Incoming and Outgoing Correspondence*, South Australian Archives, and Government Residents' Reports. Other records relating to the later period are also available.

<sup>13</sup> The Protector of Aborigines reported (188/1890, 7 March 1890, *ibid.*) that a European named Spencer had deliberately shot a native dead at Bowen Straits for unknown reasons. The Aborigines said that Spencer, a buffalo shooter, had sent two of his natives into the native camp to capture one of them, and while they were holding him, Spencer came up and shot him dead.

Searcy (*In Australian Tropics*, pp. 286-290) describes something of the history of Rodney Claude Spenser, known for his "inhuman brutality". He was ringleader of a gang which stole and destroyed some horses belonging to Chinese teamsters. In 1890 he settled at Robinson's Camp at the Bowen

Straits Revenue Station and was engaged in buffalo shooting. Searcy tells how Spenser shot, in a particularly brutal way, a native whom he accused of stealing rice. News of this murder did not reach the authorities in Darwin for some time. In the meanwhile Spenser was unofficially assisting the acting Customs Officer at Bowen Straits, and managed to embezzle a small sum of money. Later he was arrested and charged with having killed the abovementioned native. He was condemned to death, but sentence was commuted to imprisonment for life; after serving ten years, he was liberated and returned to the Territory to engage in trepanning. In 1904 Spenser established a camp at Arnhem Bay, where he was killed by Aborigines. This may perhaps be the case referred to in the main body of this work, when Doni was murdered by natives at Arnhem Bay: "Doni" is possibly a corruption of Spenser's Christian name "Rodney".

<sup>14</sup> See Carl Warburton, *Buffalo Trail*.

<sup>15</sup> 6119/22 June 1894, *ibid.*, in reference to leprosy among the Aborigines; letter from Patrick Cahill, Pine Creek, 7 April 1896, to Dashwood, Government Resident; estimates re establishing a leper station on Maria Island.

## CHAPTER 14

<sup>1</sup> The McColl case is also mentioned by Idriess in *Man Tracks* (pp. 273-88), and here again his remarks are misleading.

<sup>2</sup> The Fagan and Traynor case is briefly, and inaccurately, sketched by Idriess (*op. cit.* pp. 263-72).

<sup>3</sup> V. Hall is the author of a book, *Bad Medicine*, Melbourne 1946.

<sup>4</sup> See particularly *The Telegraph*, Sydney, 15 November 1933.

<sup>5</sup> This evidence is abbreviated here. Much of the original was given in "pidgin" English, and the interested reader is referred to the *Northern Standard* of 3 August 1934.

<sup>6</sup> *Groote Eylandt Mission Journal*; 19 April 1934, Darwin.

<sup>7</sup> *Vide Northern Standard*, Darwin, 3 August and 7 August 1934.

<sup>8</sup> This part of the evidence, like most of the native evidence, was given in "pidgin" English. We have therefore altered it slightly here.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted from the *Northern Standard*, 7 August 1934.

<sup>9a</sup> A. P. Elkin, Aboriginal Evidence and Justice in North Australia, *Oceania*, Vol. XVII, No. 3, pp. 173-210, particularly pp. 181-2. Professor Elkin quotes too from the *Commonwealth Law Reports*, Vol. 52, 1934-35, pp. 335-355, in "Tuckiar and the King".

<sup>10</sup> *The Proletarian*, Darwin (typescript), Vol. I, No. 6, issued on 8 August 1934.

<sup>11</sup> *Groote Eylandt Mission Journals*.

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<sup>12</sup> From A. J. Dyer to Warren and Long, at Groote, Darwin, 21 April 1934, *Groote Eylandt Mission Records*.

<sup>13</sup> W. J. P. Fitzgerald writing (Darwin, 31 July 1936) in the *Townsville Bulletin* (11 August 1936), replying to certain criticisms regarding "justice" at Darwin Courts, and more specifically the case of Dagiar and Mirera, states that an appeal was made to the High Court of Australia to commute Dagiar's death sentence. His conviction of murder was "quashed", and he was set free to be sent back to his own people. "Being transferred from Fanny Bay Gaol to the Darwin Aborigine Compound, Dagiar, apparently not understanding that he was free and safe, took to the bush and, so far as Fitzgerald was aware or can ascertain, had not been heard of since — and that was in October 1934".

<sup>14</sup> See Dr Thomson's remarks on the McColl, Fagan and Traynor cases (*Interim General Report of Preliminary Expedition to Arnhem Land, Northern Territory of Australia, 1935-36*. Department of Interior, Canberra, 1936, p. 15.)

## CHAPTER 15

<sup>1</sup> *Groote Eylandt Mission Records*, 25-5-28 and 23-6-28

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 5th, 8th and 28th of December 1926.

<sup>3</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 October 1932.

<sup>4</sup> *Groote Eylandt Mission Records*, 15 March 1933.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

23-2-34. "Blacks bring fish and a letter from Gray and Wright to the 'Holly' to say that they have been wrecked above Caledon Bay and have lost their boat and ask for assistance".

26-2-34. "The 'Hope' left with Mounted-Constable Hall, Freddie, Paddy, Laurie and three 'Balamumu' natives for Gray's camp above Caledon Bay".

27-2-34. "The 'Holly' arrived and went instead of the 'Hope'".

14-3-34. "'Holly' returned; Gray is taking over the 'Oituli' from Mr Lousada (of Groote)".

<sup>6</sup> The Aborigines are rather confused as to the sequence of events at this time, but so many boats were coming and going that there is some excuse for this. Apparently Gray had made arrangements in December 1933 to pick up the Aboriginal murderers of the Japanese: for the *Groote Eylandt Mission Records* (quoting the Log of the "Holly", Caledon Bay Expedition, 4 December 1933) mention that when the "Holly" was anchored at the Japanese camp past Cape Grey, Gray's boat was anchored at that place also, and Aborigines were working trepang. (This was approximately a year after the Japanese massacre.) The Rev. Warren from Groote met Gray and Wright, who were with a number of Port Bradshaw and Milngimbi natives. Among those present were the natives implicated in the

Japanese killing of the previous year, and Gray persuaded them to surrender to police to save punishment of the whole tribe. The Mission lugger "Holly" was thought to be a police boat. It was not until March-April of the next year that Gray brought in the Caledon Bay Aborigines for trial in Darwin.

## CHAPTER 16

<sup>1</sup> Idriess briefly mentions the Caledon Bay massacre in *Man Tracks* (pp. 228-243), but many of his statements are misleading.

<sup>2</sup> From the journal of Mr Fred Gray, trepanger, entitled "Bringing in the Caledons", *Northern Standard*, 20 April 1934.

<sup>3</sup> This Mission station was not retained. However, in 1934 the following references are found in the Groote Eylandt Mission *Records*. On 28 September 1934 Mr Gray and Mr Smith in the "Oituli", with Sam Doleton from Darwin, and some Milingimbi boys, reached Groote. On 31 October Mr Gray returned from Bickerton Island, and on 31 December the "Holly" left for Caledon Bay with Mr Gray, Mr Taylor, Miss Dove (from the Groote Eylandt Half-Caste Settlement), Mr Smith and half-castes Harold, Fred, Harry and Virgil. They returned to Groote on 3 January and reported a very successful journey. They called in at Trial Bay and held a church service, and planted pines and coconuts; then they proceeded to Cape Grey and met over eighty natives; here another service was held, pictures shown, and on the following day there were games, etc.

<sup>4</sup> It will be remembered that the Groote Eylandt Mission received a message relating to Gray's wreck on 23 February 1934.

<sup>5</sup> Wonggu has received a certain amount of publicity within recent years, mainly owing to the reports of Dr Donald Thomson, and became notorious for his large number of wives. He was at Yirrkalla during the writers' period of field research (1946-47).

<sup>6</sup> *Northern Standard*, 25 May 1934.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 1 June 1934.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 5 June 1934.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 August 1934.

<sup>10</sup> *Groote Eylandt Mission Records*.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

## CHAPTER 17

<sup>1</sup> *The Aborigines and Half-Castes of Central and North Australia, Report by J. W. Bleakley, 1928*, The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, 1929, No. 21.

## REFERENCES

<sup>2</sup> Conference of representatives of Missions, Societies, and Associations interested in the welfare of Aboriginals to consider the report and recommendations submitted to the Commonwealth Government by J. W. Bleakley, Convened by the Minister of State for Home Affairs of the Commonwealth of Australia, Commonwealth of Australia, typescript; 12 April 1929.

<sup>3</sup> For a general discussion of Japanese relations with Australia in respect of trade and so on, see Australian and Oriental Immigration 1900-34 by M. Hentze in *Australia and the Far East, Diplomatic and Trade Relations*, edited by I. Clunies Ross, Sydney 1935.

<sup>4</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 September 1933.

<sup>5</sup> *Northern Standard*, 15 September 1933, in an article entitled: A Protection for Missionaries.

<sup>6</sup> *The Melbourne Argus*, 2 October 1933.

<sup>7</sup> *Bulletin*, Sydney, 16 May 1934, reprinted in the *Northern Standard* of 8 June 1934.

<sup>8</sup> Old Time Memories, The Aboriginal, Past and Present, by C. E. Gaunt, *Northern Standard*, 8 June 1934. The issues of the *Northern Standard* before the last war are a veritable storehouse of data relating to Aboriginal-European contact.

<sup>9</sup> *The Labor Daily*, Sydney, 30 May 1933, and *Northern Standard*, 27 June 1933.

<sup>10</sup> *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 November 1933.

<sup>11</sup> See *Northern Standard* 20 April 1934.

<sup>12</sup> *Interim General Report of Preliminary Expedition to Arnhem Land, Northern Territory of Australia, 1935-36*, by D. Thomson, 9 April 1936, Department of the Interior, Canberra; typescript.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 45-46.

<sup>13a</sup> In 1935 the position of chief medical officer was offered to a doctor who had some interest in anthropology, but this was declined. In 1951, however, a medical officer was finally appointed to serve as a "Flying Doctor" and keep in touch with all the main Aboriginal camps in the Territory.

<sup>14</sup> *Report on Expedition to Arnhem Land, 1936-37*, by D. Thomson, The Northern Territory of Australia, Commonwealth of Australia, 1939, No. 337.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 14-15, *et passim*.

<sup>16</sup> C. Barrett, *Coast of Adventure*, pp. 94-96, mentions a Japanese lugger in the Wessels.

<sup>17</sup> *Recommendations of Policy in Native Affairs in the Northern Territory of Australia*, by D. Thomson, The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, Melbourne, December 1937, Canberra 1937-38, No. 56, p. 7

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 1-8.

<sup>19</sup> W. L. Warner, *A Black Civilization*.

<sup>20</sup> We are not taking into account here the work of Sir Baldwin Spencer on the western fringe of Arnhem Land (i.e., in his *Native Tribes of the Northern Territory*, 1914).

## CHAPTER 18

<sup>1</sup> This missionary (Rev. Confalonière) had some contact with the natives of the Cobourg Peninsula, and translated into the local dialect a manuscript prayer-book, a short Catechism of the Christian Doctrine, the Lord's Prayer, Hail Mary and Creed, Ten Commandments, and short history of the Passion of our Redeemer. *Vide* Presidential Address to the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia, (South Australian Branch). Delivered at the Anniversary Meeting, 29 October 1915, by Hon. John Lewis: *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia (S.A. Branch)*, 28th Session, 1914, Adelaide 1915, pp. 40-41.

<sup>2</sup> Government Resident, *Report on the Northern Territory for 1900*; Appendices: Aborigines.

<sup>3</sup> W. S. Chaseling, *Children of Arnhem Land*, Sydney 1939, p. 54.

<sup>4</sup> We are not dealing here with the matter of "mixed-bloods", because a number of these children were brought to Croker Island from other parts of the Northern Territory: and their problems need a separate study, taking in other areas as well.

<sup>5</sup> E.g., J. W. Bleakley's *Report*, op. cit. 1928; T. T. Webb, *Spears to Spades*, Sydney 1938; W. S. Chaseling, *op. cit.*; and the journals of the Church Missionary Society and the Methodist Overseas Mission.

<sup>5a</sup> A. P. Elkin, *Citizenship for the Aborigines, A National Aboriginal Policy*, Sydney 1944; e.g., Chapter 5 and Appendix 4.

<sup>6</sup> *Report on the Administration of the Northern Territory for the year ended 30th June 1942*.

<sup>7</sup> *Vide Native Employment and Welfare in the Northern Territory*, by R. and C. Berndt; also Special Survey of Army-Controlled Settlements in the Northern Territory, 1945-46, unpublished report.

<sup>8</sup> *Report on Administration of the Northern Territory for the year ending 30th June 1946*.

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